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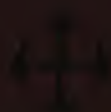
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COMPARISON
OF
PIGMENT PROPERTIES



SAFETY 20



A HUMBLE

Companion to the Pilgrim's Progress:

BEING A

SERIES OF DISCOURSES ON THAT GREAT ALLEGORY,

*Originally Delivered in Oakes Chapel, Huddersfield,
during the Winter of 1870-71.*

BY THE

REV. SAMUEL BURN.



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DEDICATION.



TO

THE REV. ALFRED TILLY, OF CARDIFF,

AND TO

THOSE FRIENDS IN WALES, IN YORKSHIRE,

AND ELSEWHERE,

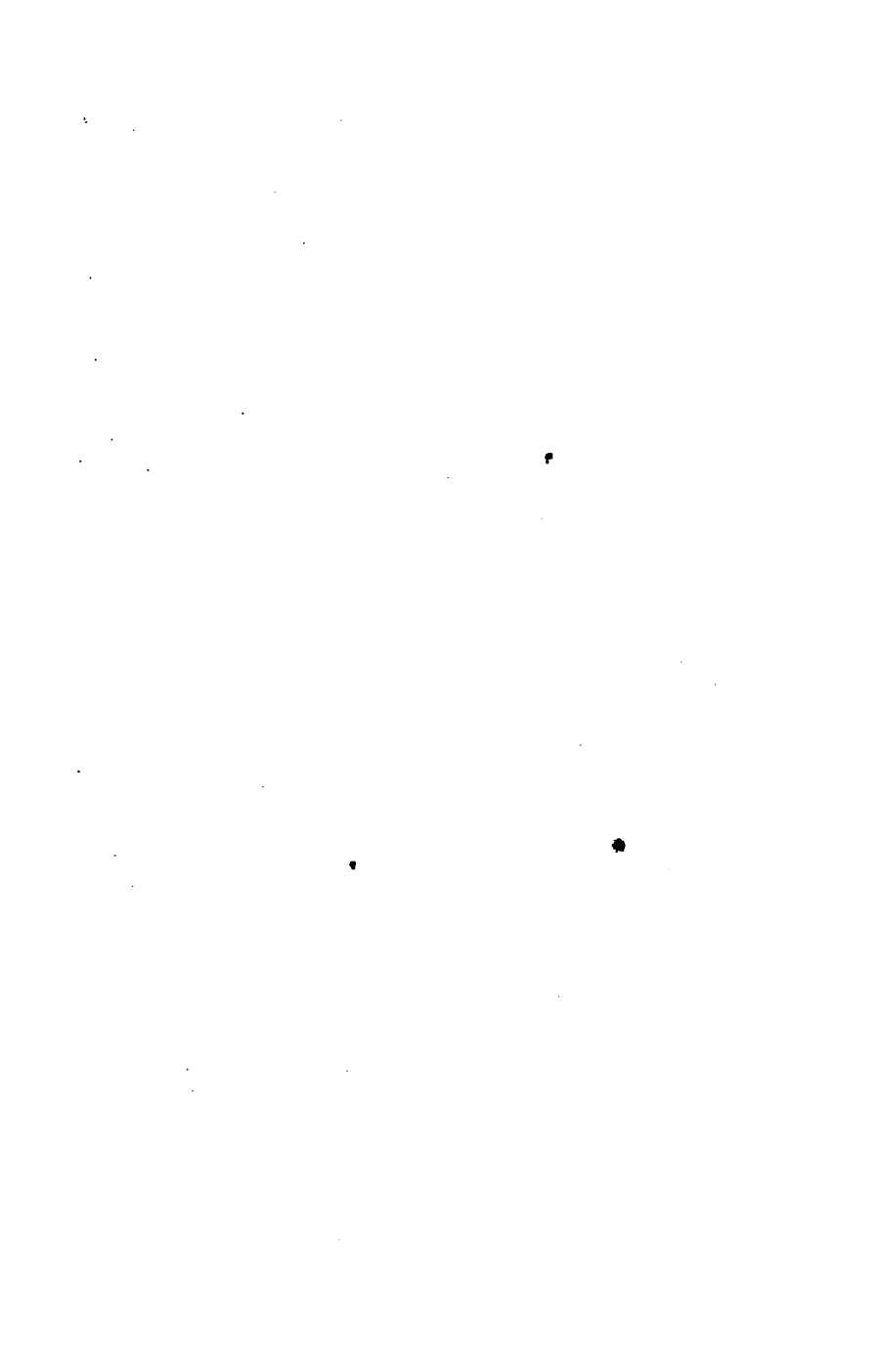
WHO WERE ASSOCIATED WITH HIM IN A RECENT ACT OF KINDNESS

TO THE AUTHOR,


THIS LITTLE WORK IS RESPECTFULLY AND GRATEFULLY

INSCRIBED.

TAUNTON, *March, 1874.*



PREFACE.

HE publication of such a volume is not necessarily presumptuous. There were critics who would have prevented the publication of the Pilgrim's Progress itself, and critics will probably be found to rebuke the presumption of the present author. Be it so. Yet let him say that, in preparing these discourses for the press, he was not only occupying in the best manner that occurred to him some of the too ample leisure occasioned by sickness, but was influenced by the hope that they might be found as useful to some readers as they are known to have been to some hearers. They were first of all suggested by Dr. Cheever's well-known Lectures on the Pilgrim's Progress, but will not be found to resemble them more than discourses which have the same subject and object must resemble each other. The one entitled "The Pilgrims and the Interpreter" is here substituted for another on the same subject, and had been previously delivered to the same congregation.

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THE AUTHOR OF
THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS.

I.

THE AUTHOR OF THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS.

"He was a faithful man, and feared God above many."—
Neh. vii. 2.

THESE words refer to Hananiah, the ruler of the palace [or citadel] of Jerusalem in the time of Nehemiah; but they are applicable to many another man, and are strikingly applicable to that illustrious servant of God of whom I have undertaken to speak this evening. John Bunyan was, indeed, an eminently pious man, and we may consider with advantage the manner in which his eminent piety was produced and displayed. It is possible that some have hastily concluded that this is not a suitable subject of discourse from the pulpit on the Lord's-day; but a little

reflection should suffice, I think, to dissipate this idea. If Bunyan had been the pastor of this Church instead of the Baptist Church in Bedford, and had died in our own time instead of in the seventeenth century, a discourse of this kind would have been deemed highly appropriate. It would have been called a funeral sermon, and this is such a sermon; a sermon relating to one whose praise is in all the Churches, and whose consecrated genius is still employed by the Great Shepherd of souls with blessed and widespread effect. Moreover, I want you to become better acquainted with that wonderful allegory of which he is the author, and those who would appreciate the Pilgrim's Progress should understand that his own pilgrimage through the world accounts for the production of this book. It seems, therefore, proper to speak of him before we proceed to examine it. "He was a faithful man, and feared God above many."

I.

We have first to consider how the eminent piety of John Bunyan was produced. It is always interesting to learn the means of grace employed by the Holy Spirit for the conversion and Christian culture of a human being, especially if it be the case of one renowned for both genius and goodness.

I. Bunyan's *dreams* were means of grace to him. Some of his earliest religious impressions were made by them, and repeatedly renewed in the same manner. His experience illustrated the language of Elihu: "God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction." This truth was not only exemplified in the case of certain persons mentioned in Holy Writ. The story of Colonel Gardiner's conversion, as related by Doctor

Doddridge, is well known and well attested, and there are various other stories of the same kind; but it is probable that for every such case which becomes widely known, there are many others which do not get noised abroad at all. The dreams of Bunyan's boyhood repeatedly aroused his conscience. When eight or nine years old he dreamt of hell, and of demons who sought to drag him into it. He was wont to awake in horror as often as he dreamt thus. In the day-time he was haunted by the memories of the night, and would tremble as the darkness came on again. It does not appear that these early dreams had any lasting effect, but some which visited his pillow in after years were more beneficial. His experience of dreams, indeed, was such that he might well resort to that literary fiction which has occasioned him to be called the Glorious Dreamer. The Pilgrim's Progress purports to be the record of a dream.


2. Bunyan's *marriage* was a means of grace to him. The Bible says that whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and that a good wife is from the Lord. It proved so in this case. It seems strange that so godless a man as Bunyan was at the time of his marriage could obtain the hand of a pious girl. It is not desirable that such a maiden should become the wife of one addicted to Sabbath-breaking and profane swearing, but this one's marriage was overruled for good. So much did her society charm her husband, that he would often stay at home with her instead of resorting to the village green, and there taking his part in the profanity of those who frequented it. It is pleasant to think of the influence which this pious woman thus brought to bear upon her husband. He was a working man, a poor mechanic, a travelling tinker, and it were well if the majority of our working men had such worthy wives. When such men are more or

less addicted to evil courses, they are not likely to be reclaimed by scolding wives and comfortless homes. The wife who makes the house tidy, and maintains a cheerful temper, and wears a smiling face, and speaks a kindly word to the weary man who presents himself to her in the evening, and looks out for every opportunity of saying a seasonable word to him about his spiritual welfare, may hope, however, to be as successful in keeping her husband from going utterly to the bad as was this Elstow tinker's wife. She was the daughter of a pious man, who had no other property to leave her than two religious books, one called "The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven," and the other, "The Practice of Piety." I have sometimes thought that the first suggestion relative to Bunyan's great allegory may have come to him from the former of these books. "The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven" and the "Pilgrim's Progress" are assuredly kindred

titles. Well, the tinker's wife used to coax her husband to read these books to her, and would apply their contents to his own case, and tell him of the worth of her father, to whom they had once belonged. These readings and conversations had such an effect that he was induced to attend a place of worship with his wife, and this was no small matter. There are women in the habit of attending the house of God who have not been able to induce their husbands to accompany them. It is, however, worth their while to persevere. There is reason to hope that their best wishes will be fulfilled if they can but induce their husbands to attend the place where God's mercy is entreated and His Word expounded.

3. The *sermons* Bunyan heard in the place of worship his wife had persuaded him to frequent were means of grace to him. This, however, was not the case for some time. He was more impressed in the first instance with

the other parts of the service than with the sermon. He soon became what is now called a Ritualist, and used to adore all things connected with the service—the priest, the clerk, the surplice, and the pulpit—as holy. Such a reverence did he conceive for the priesthood that, whenever he met a clergyman in the street, he felt ready to lie down and let the other trample on him. The Elstow parson was not himself a High Churchman, but a Puritan. The Puritan clergy were for the most part good Christians, good scholars, good pastors, and good preachers. The Elstow parson was probably one of this type; and one day he preached a sermon on Sabbath-breaking which the young tinker thought was made for him, and which made him sensible of his sinfulness in the sight of God. Bunyan's liking for the forms and ceremonies of the Church had not occasioned him to abandon his Sabbath-breaking and profanity, and even this sermon did not prevent



him from taking part in the sports of the village green in the afternoon of the day it was preached. But it did him good, nevertheless. It made him feel his guilt, and we need not doubt that he derived some advantage from the other sermons he heard in Elstow Church.

4. A *rebuke* which Bunyan received from an ungodly woman, on one occasion, was a means of grace to him. He was swearing at a terrible rate in her hearing, and she declared that his horrible language made her tremble; her remonstrance being so stern and energetic that he was not only silenced and made to hang his head with shame at the time, but prevented from repeating the offence at any future period. God makes choice sometimes of most unlikely ministers to do His work, and in this instance He employed a wicked woman to administer an effectual rebuke to a wicked man.

5. The *reading of the Scriptures* was another means of grace to John Bunyan. He became

acquainted with a professor of religion, who talked much of the Word of God. This man turned out to be a mere hypocrite, but his conversation led the tinker to read the Bible for himself. The wondrous volume exerted a mighty effect on his mind. It fed his imagination. It appealed to his genius. Its histories, parables, and poetry delighted him. But while he read it with pleasure, he misapprehended its doctrine. He obtained from it the general notion that it shall be well with the righteous and ill with the wicked, and under the influence of this notion began to seek after righteousness by earnest endeavours after self-reformation. He resolved to abandon his Sabbath-breaking. The sports to which he had been wont to resort on the Lord's-day were not then generally regarded with disapprobation. They were indeed encouraged by Church and State, by Law and Custom. The Books of Sports had recently been published by royal authority, and their

contents had been published from the desks of the parish churches. The games then common were divided by these books into two classes, viz., those which might, and those which might not, be played on the Lord's-day; and it was enacted that those who did not attend church on Sunday morning should not be allowed to sport on Sunday afternoon. No wonder that Puritan clergymen like the Elstow parson were dissatisfied with the condition of the Church in which they bore office; and no wonder that a young man like Bunyan found it difficult to abandon practices which were not only pleasant in themselves, but sanctioned by such high authority. His favourite Sunday sports were cat-playing, bell-ringing, and dancing. The first of these was reluctantly relinquished, and the second still more reluctantly. Bell-ringing is neither bad in itself, nor a bad thing when employed to summon people to church on the Lord's-day. But that which is harmless in

itself may become an evil when associated with certain things. In Bunyan's time the ringers would assemble in the belfry; and ale would be handed round, and profane jests would circulate, and intemperate laughter would be indulged in during the intervals of ringing, so that this young aspirant after righteousness was constrained to feel that it was wrong for him to take part in the matter, and ceased to ring. But he still went to the belfry, till driven from it by the thought that one of the bells, or the steeple itself, might fall and crush him beneath it. It was still harder to give up his Sunday dancing, and it was more than a year before he could finally abandon it. This change in his habits excited the attention and admiration of his neighbours, and he was delighted with their approbation, being himself convinced that he was now a truly godly person, and that he pleased God as well as any man in England. But, alas! his heart was

not renewed. Profanity had given place to spiritual pride, and the publican had become a pharisee, but he was still a stranger to the only righteousness which is acceptable to God.

6. *The conversation of some Christian women* was a means of grace to Bunyan. They were members of the Baptist Church in Bedford, and though poor in a worldly sense, were rich in faith. They were sitting on a doorstep when the young tinker overheard them talking about the new birth, the work of God in their own hearts, the temptations of the devil, and the love of Christ. He heard them speak also of the insufficiency of their own righteousness in the sight of God, and the all-sufficiency of that of Christ. He was deeply interested, read his Bible thenceforth with new eyes, and became a truly converted man. Having sought out the women whose conversation had been so useful to him, he was introduced by them to their pastor and the other members of the Church to

which they belonged, and after a while he was baptized and received into their communion. Little did those poor women think that their conversation would lead to the conversion of another human being. Little did they think, when they introduced the tinker to their pastor, that he would become that pastor's successor. But so it was; and all the good which has resulted from the labours of John Bunyan is traceable to their consistent conversation. The lesson thus taught is clear. You may be neither rich nor learned, you may hold no particular office in the Church to which you belong; but if you honour your Divine Master by mere Christian speech and behaviour, He may honour you by employing your agency to effect the conversion of those who are more gifted than yourselves, the fruits of whose successful spiritual labours shall all be traceable to your humble ministry.

7. The *painful discipline* to which Bunyan

was subjected in the providence of God was a means of grace to him. His sufferings were great and manifold ; nor need we be surprised at this, seeing that the Lord has said, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten."

Some of Bunyan's troubles had their sources external to himself. After his conversion he was brought to the brink of dissolution by severe sickness. His pious wife died, and left four orphan children to the poor tinker's care. But trials of this nature, however severe, are common enough, and he was not crushed by them. His health returned to him, and it may here be observed that his constitution had never been undermined by unchaste or drunken habits. The drunkard may become a sober man, but the effects of his intemperance are likely to be felt to the close of life. A debauchee may become a new creature, but that rottenness of the bones of which the Scriptures speak will be experienced nevertheless. Bunyan's vigorous

physical and mental constitution had never been impaired by the vices of the sot and the seducer, or he might not have rallied from the sickness he experienced. The place of his departed wife was supplied by a worthy successor, the noble-minded woman whose picture is familiar to many of us. Not long after he had joined the Baptist Church he became a preacher, and his preaching brought him into trouble. About that time some two thousand of the best ministers of the Established Church were driven out of it by the enemies of the gospel; but if the persecutors were angry with the learned Puritan clergy for preaching the truth, they were furious when unlearned laymen like the Elstow tinker presumed to do so. Bunyan was arrested, like many others, and cast into prison. His imprisonment lasted for twelve years, and it was during those years of captivity that he composed the *Pilgrim's Progress*.

His worst troubles, however, were those which

had their source within himself. After he had become a Christian he was some time before he could realise that happy circumstance. He was the victim of distressing doubts. Is there a God at all? was one question which presented itself to his mind; and when that was satisfactorily answered, there were others. Had he the faith without which it is impossible to please God? and was he one of God's elect? Then he was tempted to sell the Saviour—to sell Him for anything or everything, for the pin he picked up from the floor or the stick he chopped for his fire—and he imagined that he had yielded. He thought, therefore, that his guilt now resembled that of Judas Iscariot or Francis Spira, and that he had committed the unpardonable sin. At the Lord's Table he was tempted to wish some deadly thing to the communicants, and in the pulpit he was tempted to blaspheme in presence of those who had assembled to hear him preach the gospel. When

he had been but a short time in prison he was tempted to despair in prospect of the death with which he was then menaced by his enemies. But his soul was brought out of prison while his body remained there. His faith in Christ triumphed over all these temptations, and it was found that the discipline he had thus experienced had so ministered to his growth in grace that he had become a spiritual giant.

II.

It remains to show how the eminent piety of John Bunyan was displayed. His Christian career was one of obedience to the Saviour's precept, "Let your light so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven."

1. The eminent piety of this great man was partly displayed by his *industry* in the service of his Lord. His labours as a preacher were abundant, popular, and very successful. He

•

preached often in London as well as in Bedford, and regularly itinerated the district lying between Oxford and Cambridge. If any one is still foolish enough to sneer at the idea of a tinker being transformed into a preacher, it may be mentioned that the common people were not the only persons who heard him gladly. Dr. John Owen, who had been Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University, used to listen to him with pleasure; and when King Charles the Second expressed surprise that so learned a theologian should care to hear a tinker prate, he replied that he would gladly surrender all his learning to be able to prate like that same tinker. Not only as a preacher, but as a pastor, was Bunyan industrious. The pastorate of a Nonconformist Church in those days demanded a degree of exertion not called for in a period like the present, and he was not found wanting. Moreover, he was a diligent author. He wrote much for

Christ. "The Pilgrim's Progress" was by no means the only production of his pen. He wrote as many books as he lived years, *i. e.*, sixty. Some of them were written in prison, but this was not because he had nothing else to do while there. His wife and four children were dependent on him for a livelihood, and he employed himself in tagging stay-laces with his pincers that they might have bread. Let me remind you that there is work for every Christian in his Saviour's service, and that if any one has not yet ascertained his particular vocation, he has but to say, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" in order to be informed on the subject.

2. Bunyan's eminent piety was also displayed in his *moral courage*. It was a brave thing to preach the gospel in defiance of the law which made such preaching a crime. It was brave to say what he did to the judge

whose sentence consigned him to prison. That sentence was a severe one, and the condemned man had no reason to doubt that it would be exactly executed. He was to be imprisoned for three months. He was then to choose whether he would attend his parish church and abstain from preaching, or be banished from the country. He was not to return from banishment on pain of death. This sentence having been pronounced, the prisoner said, "If I was out of prison to-day, I would preach the gospel again to-morrow, by the help of God." Accordingly, when he was finally released from prison, he did preach that truth which is destined to triumph over all its opponents. In doing so he not only showed his hearers the way of salvation, but sternly rebuked the wickedness of those who occupied the high places of society and oppressed the poor. He had already experienced the power of such persons to injure him, and knew the risk he

ran; but the fear of God lifted him above the fear of man, and he spoke out clearly the things he deemed it right to say. His courage was equally conspicuous in the rebukes he addressed to his own people when he thought them in fault. Some of them resented his conduct in this respect, and sought to occasion him trouble, but the majority valued him all the more for his faithfulness. It requires no great courage for a preacher to rebuke the people who never hear him. He may safely blame some of them for their heresy and others for their vices. But let him tell his own people to their faces what he considers wrong in them, and it is a different matter. It is not surprising that the bold preacher of Bedford was hated by various persons. He was repeatedly assailed by slanders too foul for me to particularise; but nothing could daunt him, for "he was a faithful man, and feared God above many."

3. This great man's eminent piety was displayed also in his *humility*. The spiritual pride which sprang from his ignorance in the days when he thought to please God by his own righteousness had vanished as soon as he apprehended the truth. Those who have read his autobiography must be aware that he had a very lowly estimate of himself. The very title, "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners," proclaims his humility. He cherished the spirit of that apostle who refused to glory in anything save the grace of God and the cross of Christ. When some one complimented him at the foot of the pulpit-stairs on the sweet sermon he had just preached, he quietly said that the devil had whispered to him on the same subject before he got out of the pulpit-door. This humility is an element of true piety wherever it is found; the more eminent the piety, the more profound the humility. The Christian resembles an eagle soaring to-

wards the sun, while his opinion of his own merit resembles that eagle's shadow reflected in the lake below. As the bird rises its shadow sinks. It was thus with Bunyan, and thus also may it be with each of us!

4. Our hero's eminent piety was displayed, moreover, in the *cheerfulness* which characterised him. His writings abundantly testify to this cheerfulness on his part. This is especially true of his verse. That verse may not be called poetry, but it has a value of its own, and exhibits a quaint and pleasant humour which does one good. I have no difficulty in crediting a story which has come down to us, of a practical joke he played off at the expense of one of his neighbours. It corresponds with the humour of his writings and with the accounts we have of his frolicsome and fun-loving boyhood. This neighbour was a cooper, and had a pile of tubs standing at his door. Bunyan overturned the tubs with a kick; and when

the owner remonstrated, he replied, "Nay, but Master Cooper, every tub must stand on its own bottom!" One is ready to suspect that the cooper was of a less independent disposition than Bunyan deemed desirable, and that his merry neighbour meant to teach him an important lesson by that playful kick. At all events we see (and those who are fond of using the word *puritanical* in the sense of *sour* should take good heed to it) that this Puritan preacher's religion had not soured his temper, and that it had prevented his many trials from doing so. The much afflicted Christian was still capable of a merry joke. Now, many Christians are less cheerful than they might be, and much harm results. Some such persons are depicted in the "Pilgrim's Progress." Nevertheless, the tendency of true piety is to produce cheerfulness, and eminent piety will always do so. "Religion never was designed to make our pleasures less." It was designed,

and is adapted, to do the exact reverse. Sooner or later, in every instance, it must produce a joy which is "unspeakable and full of glory." He who now says to His people, "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, Rejoice," will hereafter say to each of them, "Well done, good and faithful servant; . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

5. Lastly, the eminent piety of Bunyan was displayed in the *charity* for which he was remarkable. I think his writings will compare favourably with those of many of his contemporaries in this respect; but it is of more importance to remark his conduct. His death was brought about by his charitable endeavours to reconcile a father and son who had quarrelled. It was necessary for him to go to London on this business. He went thither, and had the happiness of accomplishing his benevolent purpose. But he was then sixty years of age, his originally strong frame was

much enfeebled, and the exertion and exposure of this journey were too much for him. He returned home to die, and his remains were presently carried to their last resting-place. Thus died one of the best of men, and his death was worthy of his life. You know what is said in the Word of God concerning the charity which was so conspicuous at the close of his career. It is the cardinal grace of the Christian character. It is an abiding virtue. It fulfils the law. It pleases God. It has a strength and beauty all its own. It is superior to brilliant gifts. It is the queen of moral qualities. It is indispensable. Without it culture, genius, inspiration, heroism, and all other things are vain. Yet each of us may obtain it. The love of God may be shed abroad in our hearts. The love of Christ may exert its constraining and ennobling power in our hearts and lives. We may resemble the author of the "Pilgrim's Progress"—not pro-

bably in mental power and successful labour, but in respect of the charity which distinguished him. May He whose mission is to fulfil the law fulfil it in our hearts, so that we may no longer despise the Voice which says to each of us what has too long been said in vain, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This Voice was heard and heeded by the humble tinker of the Bedfordshire village, and hence it became true of him that "he was a faithful man, and feared God above many."

THE PILGRIMAGE.

THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS.

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II.

THE PILGRIMAGE.

"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."—*Jer.* vi. 16.



THE Good Way spoken of in the text is very frequently and variously spoken of in other parts of the sacred volume. It is called the way of the righteous, the way of truth, the way of God's saints, the way of life, the way of holiness, the way of understanding, and the narrow way that leadeth unto life. This is the way depicted in Bunyan's book, the full title of that book being, "The Pilgrim's Progress from this world to that which is to come." A pilgrim is a traveller; and the word has come to mean a particular kind of tra-

veller, viz., one who travels to a holy place. The Moslem devotee, who leaves his home to visit the tomb of Mahomet, is a pilgrim; the crusaders of the Middle Ages were pilgrims; and Christians are called pilgrims in the Word of God because they do not make their home in this world, but seek a holy city which is out of sight. Now the text is an exhortation to walk in the way that leads to this Holy City; and the sanctified genius of Bunyan has given as graphic a description of this way as though it were a veritable road from one city to another. The pilgrim starts from the City of Destruction, passes over the Slough of Despond, goes through the Wicket Gate, arrives at the Interpreter's House, approaches the Cross, ascends the Hill Difficulty, calls at the House Beautiful, passes through the Valleys of Humiliation and the Shadow of Death, and so comes to Vanity Fair. Then he traverses a plain called Ease, travels by the side of a beautiful river, comes

to the Delectable Mountains, wends his way across the Enchanted Ground, goes through the Land Beulah, fords the river by which that land is bounded, ascends the mountain on the other side, and so enters the Celestial City. The pilgrim's progress along the way thus described has three aspects. It is a progress in respect of time, of character, and of condition.

I.

The pilgrim's progress in the Good Way is an advance in respect of time. It was this aspect of the subject which the patriarch Jacob had in view when he held that conversation with Pharaoh which is recorded in Gen. xlvii. The king had asked him, "How old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years : few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life

of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." Life itself was the pilgrimage of which Jacob spoke, the years of his life were the stages of the pilgrimage, and the days of those years were the steps. There are some affecting thoughts which present themselves in connection with this view of the subject. We cannot reflect without emotion on the multitudes who have completed this pilgrimage. "Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" Former pilgrims have disappeared. The tombs and the names and the writings of some of them remain to us, but in the great majority of instances no such memorials exist. What then? The saying of the apostle relates to them all: "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." This encouraging and consoling sentence will soon

be applicable to many who are even now on their way to the Celestial City. We rejoice in the assurance that there are many such pilgrims at the present time. Some of us claim to be persons of this class. Would that all of us were really such! There are many pretended pilgrims on the earth, and there are many also who do not even pretend to be pilgrims. Life is a journey to all men, but it is not a pilgrimage to all. We are travellers of necessity, but only those of us are pilgrims who seek that heavenly city which is out of sight. There are many persons living now who respond to the counsels which are addressed to them in the name of God as did some who lived in the days of Jeremiah: "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein." The journey of life,

whether it be a pilgrimage or not, will soon be over in our case. We know not which of us will be the first to complete it. There are certain probabilities as to this subject, but they can only be relied upon in a general kind of way. It is probable, but not certain, that the old will die before the young, and the sickly before those whose health is at present unimpaired. None of us, however, can expect to say what Jacob said in Pharaoh's presence, and only a few of us will be able to adopt the words of the psalmist, mournful as they are, as applicable to our own case: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." In view of this brevity of human life, and of the suddenness with which it may terminate in the case of any one of us, is it not sad that it is as far as possible from being a pilgrimage in number-

less instances? Let it not be thus with you. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." "Thus saith the Lord, Consider your ways!"

II.

The pilgrim's progress in the Good Way is an advance in respect of character. It is a moral progress. Those who walk in this way are sinners like the rest of mankind, and some of them have been notorious for their wickedness. But every step they take in the right direction amounts to an improvement of their moral character, and when their journey is completed they will be numbered with the spirits of just men made perfect. It must, however, be acknowledged that some pilgrims

make but little progress in a great while. They allow themselves to be hindered by a variety of things. Now they lie down to rest when they ought to "be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Then they turn out of the way to the right hand or to the left, as the case may be. Again, they actually go backward instead of forward. But on the whole they do make progress, and will eventually attain to moral perfection. The Apostle Paul was not the only pilgrim who has had a right to say, "I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Now I want to show you how this improvement of character, this moral progress, is attained; and in doing so I shall exhibit Bunyan's own teaching on the subject, of which it may be here observed

that it is in thorough harmony with the testimony of the Scriptures. There are four things which Bunyan represents as having to do with the pilgrim's progress, viz., an application to Christ, submission to the Holy Spirit, contemplation of the Saviour's Cross and Sepulchre, and a peculiar personal experience.

1. Those who desire to walk in the good way must apply to the Lord Jesus Christ for His grace. The pilgrims described in Bunyan's book are represented as making their way in the first instance toward a certain Wicket Gate. Over this gate was written, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you;" and all who approached it, and did as they were thus directed, were admitted and welcomed, and sent in the way which commenced there, with all possible encouragement. This account of the Wicket Gate agrees with those words of the Saviour, "Enter ye in at the strait gate;" "I am the door;" "No man cometh unto the Father but

by me." The first thing, therefore, that any one who desires to go on pilgrimage to the Celestial City has to do is to approach the Wicket Gate, and knock thereat for admission until it is opened. In other words, the first thing a would-be pilgrim has to do is to apply to the Lord Jesus Christ for His Divine and saving grace. You have not taken a step in the way of life unless you have got to Christ. And now perhaps there are some who would be willing to approach this Wicket Gate if they could but see it. They would pray to Christ for His grace if they could but perceive Him. But they cannot see the Gate. They cannot realise the character and presence of the Saviour. There is no better counsel for them than that which was given to one of the pilgrims in Bunyan's book. Those who have read that book will remember that Evangelist gave Christian a roll, on which was written, "Flee from the wrath to come!" and that Christian having

read it, asked, "Whither must I fly?" In answer to this question Evangelist demanded, "Do you see yonder Wicket Gate?" pointing in its direction as he spoke. But Christian did not see it, and said so. Then Evangelist demanded, "Do you see yonder shining light?" and the other saying that he thought he saw that, Evangelist told him to keep that light in his eye, and assured him that if he would make for that, he would see the Gate at which he was to knock. Now this light denotes the Word of God, as the Wicket Gate denotes Christ, and if you want to find Christ, you will have to seek Him by means of those holy Scriptures which testify of Him.


2. Those who desire to walk in the good way must submit themselves to the Holy Spirit. The pilgrims who have obtained admittance at the Wicket Gate are sent thence to the House of the Interpreter. By the Interpreter we are to understand the Holy Spirit,

who alone is able to interpret the will and word and ways of God in such a manner as to secure the salvation of His people. It must not be thought that human beings only become the subjects of the Spirit's influence after they have come to Christ. It is by His influence that they are brought to the Saviour. Christ's own words on this subject are, "No man can come to me except the Father which sent me draw him;" and the way in which the Father draws men to the Saviour is by employing the agency of the Holy Spirit. But the man thus drawn to Christ is hardly likely to understand at the time by whose influence he is drawn; whereas, after he has found Christ, he will understand that his business as a Christian is to submit to the Holy Spirit in order that he may pursue his pilgrimage with success. As far as the man's own consciousness is concerned, he first comes to Christ for salvation and then to the Holy Spirit for guidance. He

first applies for admittance at the Wicket Gate, and then at the House of the Interpreter, albeit he has been all along under the influence (however unconsciously) of the Holy Ghost.

3. There can be no progress in the good way without a contemplation on the part of the pilgrim of our Saviour's Cross and Sepulchre. The theme of apostolic preaching is variously described as "Christ and Him crucified," and as "Jesus and the resurrection." Men need to obtain a near and clear view of the cross and tomb of that gracious Deliverer who died for our sins and rose again for our justification. Men need to realise the truth respecting His death and resurrection. This is why the pilgrims are described as going from the Interpreter's House, by his direction, to a place where stood a Cross and a Sepulchre near each other. The sight of these things invariably refreshed them, and as often as they thought of them afterwards they were much encouraged. Now

this corresponds with the experience of God's people in all ages. Every one who has sought the mercy of the Saviour, and placed himself under the direction of the Holy Spirit, will bear joyful testimony to the good effects of this vision. They know that Christ both died and rose again on their behalf. They know that by His death He redeemed them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them. They know that His blood cleanseth them from all sin. They know also that His resurrection was the great proof of His merit, and the great pledge of their own purchased and promised prosperity as His people. The first time, therefore, that a pilgrim obtains a view of his Saviour's cross and tomb must be a most blessed season in his experience, and as often as he afterwards calls to mind what he has thus seen his bliss must be renewed. Not only will he rejoice in the sense of safety thus communicated to him, but will be deeply grateful to the Lord Jesus Christ



for hanging on that cross and lying in that sepulchre on his account ; and this gratitude will incite him to a corresponding diligence in the way which his Saviour directs him to take.

4. There will be a peculiar personal experience on the part of those who walk in this good way. This experience is of a very varied character, and is most copiously illustrated in Bunyan's book.

The experience of pilgrims is one of peculiar difficulty. It is not an easy thing to walk in the narrow way that leadeth unto life. It is not easy to abandon bad habits and to acquire better in their place. It is sometimes very hard to keep the attention duly fixed on things which are eternal and unseen. Bunyan expresses this truth by making his pilgrims go up the Hill Difficulty, and a very steep hill they found it, and one that was very hard to climb.


The experience of pilgrims is one of peculiar danger. I do not refer at present to the spiri-

tual perils to which they are exposed so much as to danger of another kind. Bunyan was not very likely to forget this danger, being himself a prisoner for conscience' sake when he wrote his marvellous book. It may be that Christians are not now in such serious danger as they formerly were. It is certain that the martyrs of former ages have secured to us by their sufferings a measure of freedom which they themselves did not enjoy. Nevertheless, the disciple of Christ is still exposed to perils, which others are not called upon to encounter. It is certain that there are Christians now living whose fidelity to their Master has resulted in the loss of temporal wealth, and health, and reputation. The professed Christian may be a very popular and prosperous person. The genuine Christian may be equally popular and prosperous. But the probability is that the pilgrim to the promised place of rest will be assailed by petty persecution in proportion to his patient perse-

verance in well-doing. It is well that those who have any idea of going on pilgrimage to the Celestial City should be forewarned on this point ; and it was on this account that Christ said so plainly, " If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Every pilgrim has to exercise some degree of self-denial as such, and to carry a more or less burdensome cross. The savage beasts and armed men, the giants and fiends we read of in the Allegory, are fitting illustrations of the perils to which God's people are exposed as such.

Another element in the experience of those who undertake this pilgrimage is a certain distress of spirit to which they are prone. When we remember how Bunyan himself suffered in this way we cannot be surprised to find this distress vividly and variously depicted in his book. Take the case of the pilgrim Christian. You remember the account of that very griev-

ous *burden* with which he was laden, and which he could neither remove by his own efforts nor get removed by any of those about him. It was the distress occasioned by this burden which first made him think of going on pilgrimage, and his object at the outset was to get rid of it. Some of us know by experience, as well as otherwise, what that burden was. The same burden presses heavily upon many a human being at the present time. It is a load of conscious guilt, remorse, and fear, which the sinner whose conscience has been aroused by the truth carries about with him. The account of the removal of poor Christian's burden is deeply interesting. He trudged along with it all the way to the Wicket Gate, hoping that on his arrival there it would be removed, but he was disappointed. He then carried it to the Interpreter's House, but again failed to obtain its removal. It was not till he got to the Cross and Sepulchre that he experienced relief. At



sight of the Cross his burden rolled from his back and tumbled into the mouth of the Sepulchre, so that he saw it no more. If you are burdened in any such manner, and will seek relief from the Lord Jesus Christ, He will give you the Holy Spirit, and that Holy Spirit will so apply the gospel to your conscience as to give you effectual relief. Christian's passage over the *Slough of Despond* illustrates another phase of the same spiritual distress. That Slough is described as a terrible place, in which many had perished, being suffocated by its filth; and even those who managed to get safely across it were in many instances more or less bespattered and befouled by its mud, while some who fell into it, and were able to scramble out again, were so disgusted as to give up all idea of going on pilgrimage. The Slough of Despond is no more really outside a man than the burden to which allusion has been made. It is really within him, and consists of those terrible

feelings which, if they are allowed to overwhelm him, will reduce him to despair. Those who are seeking Christ often fall into this Slough. They have been such terrible sinners that Christ will not receive them, or they are still so prone to sin that they will not be able to walk in the way that He shall direct. It was in such desponding ideas that Christian was sinking when Help came to him and pulled him out on the right side. Unless those who are now in this terrible Slough receive Divine help, they will either scramble out on the wrong side, or they will not get out at all. That part of Christian's pilgrimage which lay through *the Valley of the Shadow of Death* is illustrative of yet another phase of this distress. This phrase is found in the Scriptures, and seems to denote the extremity of such distress. There is something grotesque about Bunyan's description of this valley, but it is not less grim than grotesque. Its gloom, its snares, its noises, its

stenches, its lurid flames, and its fiendish apparitions, are very suggestive of that inward horror and misgiving which God's people have experienced in numberless instances. That faith is assuredly the gift of God which enables the pilgrim to exclaim, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." The imprisonment of Christian in *Doubting Castle*, the stronghold of Giant Despair, is a kindred illustration. It was well for him and his companion in tribulation that they were only imprisoned there; and that they were enabled to make their escape by means of the Key of Promise before they were slain as many had been before them. Doubt need never deepen into despair in the case of those who have the promises of God, and know how to use them. Christian experienced this kind of distress for the last time while passing through *the River of Death*. There are some of

whom it is written, "There are no bands in their death," but these are not the people of God. It is quite true that death results in blessedness to them. It is quite true also that some of them are enabled to rejoice in the anticipation of that blessedness during the whole of their passage through the river. It is equally true that all Christians have the same reason to exclaim in this crisis of their history, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" But it is a fact that the article of death is often attended with keen anguish of spirit in the case even of eminently godly men. It was so with Christian. Was it not so with Christ Himself? We need not wonder that the disciples are sometimes distressed in spirit, no less than in body, during their conflict with the swellings of Jordan, when we remember that even the Master was heard to cry, from the cross on which He died, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

It would be a great mistake, however, to suppose that the experience peculiar to pilgrims in the way of life is only sombre in its character. Notwithstanding the difficulty, danger, and distress which we have seen to be incident to their course, they have seasons of sacred enjoyment which are earnest of that perfect happiness to which they are destined to attain. It is a pleasant season which they pass, *e.g.*, in the House of the Interpreter, and so is that which they spend in the House Beautiful. We read of an Arbour provided by their Prince for their comfort in one place, and of a plain called Ease, through which their progress was altogether pleasant, in another. They are described also as pursuing their way for some time by the side of a pleasant river, which flowed through meadows curiously beautified with lilies, and was shaded by green trees which bore all manner of fruit. This river was called the River of God by David, and

the River of Water of Life by the Apostle John. In this delightful region the pilgrims obtained rest and refreshment; and the description of their experience there is a very pleasant account of the grace supplied to Christians, and of the happy effect produced thereby in their hearts. If you do not find your way to that river-side, it will not be for want of an invitation thither; for "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come; . . . and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Towards the end of their journey the pilgrims are represented as entering the country called Beulah. There the sun always shines. There the pilgrims have access to orchards and vineyards and gardens provided for their use. There the angels meet and converse with those to whom they are all ministering spirits. The idea is, of course, that a certain ecstatic happiness is sometimes vouchsafed to God's people

even in the present world, particularly when death is just before them. Those who ponder the description of the land Beulah will do well; but those who pray that they may experience the bliss denoted by it will do better. Thus, if the peculiar experience of God's people is partly painful, it is partly pleasant also. The land Beulah more than compensates for the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and the River of Life more than compensates for the River of Death; or in other words, the pleasure which attends the service of God more than compensates for any difficulty and danger and distress to which His people are exposed.

There is yet another element in the experience peculiar to those who walk in the way of life on which a word or two must be said. I refer to the downfall of that vain self-esteem to which men are so prone. The pilgrims must pass through the Valley of Humiliation.

Now those whose own experience affords them no information on the subject may be apt to suppose that the passage of pilgrims through this valley ought to be spoken of in connection with the more painful part of their experience. But this was not Bunyan's idea. In the case of one of his pilgrims, indeed, it was the scene of terrible trial; but other pilgrims did not find it such. It is described as a pleasant place in itself, and it presents a marked contrast to the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Christ Himself is said by the allegorist to have loved this region when upon earth; and here it was that the shepherd-boy was heard to sing,

“He that is down need fear no fall;

He that is low no pride;

He that is humble ever shall

Have God to be his guide.”

It is a very valuable lesson which is thus taught. It is indeed the lesson taught in those inspired words, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;” and

again, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

III.

The pilgrim's progress in the Good Way is an advance in respect of condition. Let me remind you again of the precise title of Bunyan's book: it is "The Pilgrim's Progress from this world to that which is to come." It is a wonderful change when the Christian passes from this world into the one beyond it, and it is a most blessed one. In the time that remains to us let me show you how Bunyan describes these two worlds in their relation to the people of God. His description of them both is in striking accordance with the account we find of them in Holy writ.

The pilgrims start from the City of Destruction, and from various places which are said to be in the neighbourhood of that city, such as Dark Land, Stupidity, and others with equally

expressive names. Now this City of Destruction is the present evil world, which we know is destined to be destroyed with all who love it and its lusts. Well therefore may a man tremble to remain in this doomed city, and desire to flee from the wrath to come, and turn his back on all who seek to detain him where he is, and respond to what is said to him on the subject, by putting his fingers in his ears and exclaiming as he hastens to the Saviour, Life! life! eternal life!

The pilgrim having fled for refuge to the Lord Jesus Christ, this world is no longer the City of Destruction to him. As such it is behind him. Nevertheless he is still in the world, albeit he is no longer of it. His way lies near, but not through, the Village of Morality, the town of Carnal Policy, and other places of which the allegorist speaks by way of showing how near God's people are to some who think to secure all that the soul needs by


their own policy, or to merit the Divine favour by their own righteousness.

The pilgrims are further represented as passing through the great town of Vanity Fair, which is another name for this world. The psalmist said, long before the pilgrim's progress was described by Bunyan, "Surely every man walketh in a vain show." This world does indeed present a vain show of power, of beauty, of wealth, of wisdom, of righteousness, and of pleasure. God's people walk in this vain show not less than the rest of mankind ; but whereas worldlings are influenced by what they see, Christians are able to say, "We walk by faith, not by that which appears." It were well for each of us to adopt the prayer, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way !"

The Enchanted Ground, through which the pilgrims had to pass, is another representation of the present world. This is described as a

region where men are apt to slumber, albeit they slumber at their peril. Here too the great witch, Madame Bubble, is wont to accost the pilgrims with her persuasives to iniquity. It is not difficult to understand what is said of the Enchanted Ground, or of this genius of the place; and the pilgrim may well rejoice when he feels that they are left behind him.

Now contrast the world thus variously described with that happy place which awaits the Christian in the world to come. In language borrowed from the Bible the Celestial City is described in Bunyan's book as the home of perfect men, of holy angels, and of the King of kings. It is a place in which decay, distress, and death are all unknown. It is the scene of unsullied purity and endless joy. Within it is all that the sanctified and exalted human spirit can desire, while outside its walls are darkness and despair, and evils innumerable and unutterable. If you have any sort of belief in the truth



of all this, you cannot but hope to have a place within its gates when you have passed from the world in which you are living now. But let me remind you that

“Those holy gates for ever bar
Pollution, sin, and shame ;
None can obtain admittance there
But followers of the Lamb.”

If, however, you do follow the Saviour, and accomplish the pilgrimage which He has indicated by His own footsteps, you shall assuredly find abundant reason for unfailing satisfaction in the world to come. By all that is revealed respecting the Holy City which is out of sight, and the misery of those who fail to find a place within its walls, I entreat you to aspire to a share in the blessedness of those who tread its golden pavements, sing its joyous anthems, share its hallowed service, and gaze with undazzled vision at the glories of its King. O pilgrim from the City of Destruction ! there was reason for the apostle to say, what thou too

mayest learn to say with high advantage, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

THE PILGRIMS.



III.

THE PILGRIMS.

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly : wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God : for he hath prepared for them a city." — *Heb. xi. 13-16.*



HIS is a description of those who feared God in patriarchal times, but it is applicable to all who have done so in every age. They were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and confessed themselves to be such. Their hopes were fixed on the Heavenly Country, and their life was a pilgrimage towards it. This course of life resulted from their faith in the promises of God, and was so ac-

ceptable to Him that He is not ashamed to be called their God, and hath prepared for them a city, viz., that Celestial City of which there was occasion to speak in the last discourse. Now there are many persons treading in the steps of those who are thus described at the present time, and such pilgrims have very much in common. They all desire and seek the same Heavenly Country, and are all destined to dwell for ever in the same Celestial City. Nevertheless, there are some respects in which pilgrims differ from each other, and it is instructive to contemplate their diversities of temperament and experience. These diversities are largely exhibited in Bunyan's book, and we may fix our attention with advantage on the various types of Christian character therein portrayed. The Christian warrior, the Christian martyr, the Christian friend, the Christian family, the Christian maiden, and the Christian fellowship


—these are the features in the allegory to which your attention is now invited.

I.

The Christian Warrior first claims our regard. That poor man who left the City of Destruction clothed in rags and oppressed with a heavy burden received a change of raiment and relief from his load before he arrived at the House Beautiful; and before he left that House he was supplied with the whole armour of God. Accordingly, in the illustrated editions of the “Pilgrim’s Progress,” Christian is represented as a warrior armed for battle. He appears clad in a gleaming breastplate, and carries a helmet on his head, a shield on his arm, a sword at his side or in his hand, with all the other parts of his panoply appropriately arranged.

Now all readers of the Bible know that it has much to say concerning the enemies of

God and man, the conflict in which Christians are called to engage, and the weapons which are employed on either side. It would be easy to adduce many passages of Scripture in which these things are mentioned, but there is neither time nor need for this at present. It is sufficient to remember that every Christian is directed to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and to fight the good fight of faith in order that he may lay hold on eternal life. The warfare thus described is the noblest in which human beings can engage. Other warfare cannot be sufficiently deplored. It is a hideous thing for men to grapple with each other in mortal conflict, whatever may be said to the contrary by the potentates and politicians and professional soldiers of this world. But it is a noble thing to fight, and a glorious thing to conquer, in the struggle which Christians have to maintain with the powers of darkness. The advocates of war have much



to say upon the cultivation of what are called the military virtues, but the friends of peace have at least as much to say respecting the tendency of war to promote the military vices. It is true that the military virtues need to be cultivated. It is well that human beings should be distinguished for courage and watchfulness, for obedience to lawful authority and self-denial, for patience and devotion to the public weal; but for the cultivation of these virtues no other warfare is necessary than the one to which Christians are called by the Captain of their salvation, and no better is possible.

The warrior-pilgrim had not worn his armour long before he found the need of it. As he went through the Valley of Humiliation he was assailed by the foul fiend Apollyon; and but for the offensive and defensive weapons with which he was furnished he must have been destroyed. Sooner or later,


in one way or another, more or less frequently, and more or less fiercely, every pilgrim is assailed by that dread foe who ever goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. But there is no reason for discouragement. There is an Armoury to which all pilgrims have access. There is a sentence of Holy Writ which has cheered the Christian combatant in numberless instances : " Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

There is one very noticeable feature in Bunyan's description of the pilgrim's armour. There was no harness for his back. While he faced his foes he had little reason to fear them, but it was perilous for him to turn his back on them. There is a familiar story of a captive piper who was desired by those in whose custody he was to play a march and to sound a charge. He did so cheerfully ; but when they desired him to sound a retreat, he professed himself unable to do so, declaring that the

soldiers with whom he had been associated had never any occasion to retreat. Now the virtue which the piper claimed for his comrades is one which all Christians should cultivate. There is no armour provided for the warrior - pilgrim's back, because it is no part of his Captain's will that he should turn his back upon his foe. The Lord make us all good soldiers of Jesus Christ ! There will be times when it will appear dangerous to do right, but depend on it, the real danger will be in doing wrong. To advance will be to triumph, whereas to retreat will be to expose yourselves to destruction. Beware of yielding to temptation when you feel most inclined to do so, and beware of reverting to bad habits which you have once abandoned. It is a dreadful thing to face the enemy, but it is a fatal thing to turn your back on him. Wherefore, quit you like men, and be strong.

II.

The Christian Martyr next claims our notice. The name given to the Martyr-pilgrim by the allegorist is Faithful, doubtless in remembrance of the Saviour's gracious saying, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." As Christian passed out of the House Beautiful he learned from the porter that this Faithful had passed the gates, and was by that time some distance ahead. It was not easy for Christian to overtake him; but having at length done so, the two went on together till they came to Vanity Fair. On the way they had much interesting and profitable conversation, and several incidents befell them which need not now detain us. Their arrival at the Fair occasioned a considerable sensation, their appearance and behaviour being so remarkable in that place. Their clothes, their speech, and the contempt they displayed for the things on



sale at the Fair, made them conspicuous and disliked. Being mobbed, arrested, and examined by the authorities, they were abused and scourged, laden with chains and imprisoned in a cage. They behaved nobly under these painful circumstances, their meekness and courage being such that some of their persecutors were won over to their side. After a time they were brought to trial; and we have an account of the judge, of the jury, of the indictment, of the evidence tendered against them, of the defence made by Faithful, of the charge given by the judge to the jury, of the verdict, of the sentence pronounced upon Faithful, and of the execution of that sentence. The martyr was first tortured, and then chained to a stake and consumed with fire. There is nothing extravagant in this account. It is true to the life. If any one doubts this, let him compare Bunyan's description of Lord Hate-good, the judge who condemned Faithful to the

flames, with Macaulay's description of the judges who sentenced Alice Lisle and Elizabeth Gaunt to the same doom in Bunyan's own age. We know that many thousands of faithful pilgrims have been martyred at the stake, on the scaffold, by the halter, and otherwise. We know that from the time of Stephen, ay, and from the time of Abel, there has been an ever-accumulating cry from under the altar, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" It seems strange that God should allow so many of His servants to be treated in so horrible a manner by the agents of the devil. There are, however, some considerations which enable us to understand this part of His providence in some degree. Let us briefly entertain them.

The martyrdom of men like Faithful has often resulted in the conversion of some who had been previously living in sin. It has be-

come a proverb that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. It can scarcely be doubted that many a Christian has been enabled to render greater spiritual service to other human beings by his death than by his life. Some of the martyrs were ignorant and poor persons in a worldly sense. Others were persons of position and culture. But nothing that the most gifted and influential among them had been able to say and do while still at liberty was likely to produce so profound a sensation as the death they so willingly endured in order to seal their testimony concerning their Redeemer with their blood. We can understand that, painful as it was for them to die as they did, it was yet likely that many of those who witnessed their sufferings would be led to echo the wish of the Gentile prophet, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

In many instances the martyrdom of God's

saints was the means, doubtless, of awakening the consciences of evil men in such a manner as to bring home to them a conviction of their own guilt and condemnation. That Earl of Argyle, who died upon the scaffold in the reign of our last popish king, was regarded by many of his fellow Presbyterians as a martyr in the cause of God. This also was the opinion of one who saw him sleeping a few hours before his execution, laden with irons, but as placid as an infant. "The conscience of the renegade smote him," says the historian. "He turned away, sick at heart, ran out of the castle, and took refuge in the dwelling of a lady of his family who lived hard by. There he flung himself on a couch, and gave himself up to an agony of remorse and shame. His kinswoman, alarmed by his looks and groans, thought that he had been taken with sudden illness, and begged him to drink a cup of sack. 'No, no,' he said, 'that will do me no good.' She prayed him

to tell her what had disturbed him. 'I have been,' he said, 'in Argyle's prison. I have seen him within an hour of eternity sleeping as sweetly as ever man did. But as for me ——'" Comment is needless, and it is highly probable that similar cases were very numerous indeed.

The martyrdom of so many of God's people has resulted in great advantage to the Church at large. It has had much to do with securing for us the civil and religious liberty we now enjoy. It has been the means of inciting many individual Christians to a more thorough devotion to their Master than they would otherwise have displayed. Being dead, the martyrs yet speak to us in tones which thrill the spirit with generous emotion towards Him who gave Himself for us.

We shall be the less surprised that God has permitted His servants to be slaughtered by their enemies in such numbers when we re-

member how he fulfilled His ancient promise in their experience: "As thy day so shall thy strength be." The joy of the Lord was their strength in their day of trouble. They endured as seeing Him who is invisible. The face of Stephen was not the only martyr's face which was seen to resemble the face of an angel. They might well rejoice. They might well sing God's praise, as many of them did even after they were fastened to the stake. Most significantly does Bunyan tell us that behind the crowd that witnessed Faithful's death a chariot and horses of fire awaited the result, and that his liberated spirit was presently borne up through the clouds, with sound of trumpet, the nearest way to the Celestial City.

Once more: we shall do well to consider that the martyrdom of His saints has most signally redounded to the glory of God Himself. In predicting the Apostle Peter's violent death, our Lord spake, we are told, "signifying by

what death he should glorify God." In a world where God is so variously, so constantly, and so shamefully dishonoured by so many of His creatures, it is no small matter that there have been found from time to time men and women who would obey Him at all hazards. When the potentates of the earth demanded an obedience from them which was inconsistent with their loyalty to God, they listened to the Voice which says, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Accordingly they replied to those who required them to do wrong on pain of death, "We ought to obey God rather than men," and went fearlessly to their doom. In no more impressive manner could they proclaim the truth that there is One higher than the kings of the earth, whose kingdom ruleth over all.

Thus, then, we need not be overwhelmed

with astonishment as we reflect upon the martyrdom which God has permitted so many of His people to experience. He doeth all things well. The martyrs themselves would have been the last to complain of His dealings with them. Not one of them would have refused to sing the words so familiar to us—

“Why should I complain of want or distress,
Temptation or pain? He told me no less :
The heirs of salvation, I know from His word,
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord.”

Their faith realised the truth so finely expressed by Lowell,—

“Careless seems the Great Avenger, History’s pages but record
One death struggle in the darkness ‘twixt old systems and the
Word ;
Truth for ever on the scaffold, wrong for ever on the throne ;
But that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own.”

III.

The Christian Friend next claims our regard. One of those who had been beneficially affected by the bearing of Christian and Faithful in

Vanity Fair was Hopeful; and when Christian left that place, Hopeful went with him. Thenceforth they were firm friends. "They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided."

God often softens the sorrow of His bereaved people by raising up new friends in place of those who have been taken away. As far as possible Hopeful took the place of Christian's former companion. When Moses died Joshua became the leader of the Hebrew hosts. When Elijah was carried up by a whirlwind into heaven Elisha was found to be endowed with a double portion of his master's spirit. When Stephen was stoned there was one among those who consented to his death who soon afterwards declared himself a disciple of Jesus Christ, and the ministry of Saul of Tarsus more than compensated the Church for the loss of the proto-martyr's services. When a pastor is removed from his people in our own days it

is usually found that another is soon sent to take the vacant office. You have lost many of your earlier Christian friends, and yet, have you not as many such friends now as at any former time?

Christian friendship is attended with a peculiar responsibility. If two pilgrims walk together in the Good Way, they will inevitably exert a strong mutual influence. This influence will be good upon the whole, but in some instances it may be evil. Hopeful had only recently become a pilgrim, and had much to learn respecting Divine things. He naturally looked up to his more experienced friend a great deal, just as many Christians among us are apt to look up to those of their companions who are older in years and grace than themselves. If there is any one—a wife, or brother, or sister, or child, or person in your employment—who thus looks up to you, do you not see that your own conversation and behaviour

will assuredly exert an influence for good or evil on your companion correspondent to the character of such conversation and behaviour?

Thus it was with the two pilgrim companions of whom I speak. Hopeful was much benefited by the pious and instructive conversation of his elder friend, and much influenced by his example to walk diligently in the right way. But when Christian turned aside from that way, and wandered into a region which no pilgrim ought to visit, Hopeful did the same. Let us learn the lesson thus taught. Let the Christian be careful, not only for his own sake, but for the sake of those who love him and look up to him and are influenced by him, to walk unswervingly in the path which leads to God's right hand.

It is well when a Christian's chosen companion is one whose peculiarities of temperament and character are exactly adapted to his own. Hopeful was precisely the kind of com-

panion that Christian needed. He was, as his name implies, of a hopeful disposition, and was ever ready to look on the brighter side of things. The value of a companion like Hopeful to a man like Christian is immense. Read how the one pilgrim cheered the other in the Dungeon of Despair and in the River of Death, and you will see that Bunyan means to teach this. The lesson is an important one. If you are liable to depression of spirit and to gloomy doubts, and have a companion whose Christian faith and cheerfulness are contagious, thank God for that companion, and cherish him (or her) as one of the choicest blessings God has bestowed upon you.

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IV.

The Christian Family described in the Allegory assuredly deserves our attention. You know that Bunyan's book consists of two parts. The three pilgrims of whom we have already spoken are described in the first part. It is in

the second part that we read of those pilgrims yet to be mentioned in this discourse. This Christian Family comprised five persons, viz., Christiana and her four sons, Matthew, Samuel, Joseph, and James. These sons are mere children when we first read of them, but before we close the book they have become men.

1. The account of this family illustrates the power of a pious example. Christiana was Christian's widow, and her sons were his children. He had done all in his power while with them to induce them to go on pilgrimage with himself, but his efforts had been vain. When he was no longer with them, however, Christiana found herself unable to shake off the thought of his conduct and his reward. She now desired to become a pilgrim herself, that she might be reunited with her husband in the Celestial City; and it was not long before she did actually leave the City of Destruction and

find her way to the Wicket Gate. From that Wicket Gate she took the same course as that which Christian had taken before her. She called at the same houses, climbed the same hills, went through the same valleys, and came at last to the same river and to the glory beyond it. Thus it is very frequently indeed in the actual experience of human beings. There are many saints now in heaven who vainly tried while yet on earth to induce their loved ones to accompany them in the way of life. Nevertheless those loved ones, in many instances, are following them now. The husbandman sowed his seed and departed from this country to a better, but lo! after his departure the harvest appeared. Some of you, perhaps, have pious parents in heaven, and you allowed them to leave this world without the gratification of seeing you numbered with the servants of their Lord. Do you not desire to see them again? Do you not think that even their happiness

would be increased by your entrance hereafter into the Celestial City?

2. The account of this Christian Family illustrates the blessed influence of a mother's piety. It is said of a great man that, when any one undertook to give him information about the ancestry of one or another who had attracted his attention, he was apt to say, "Don't tell me what his father was, but let me know what kind of a mother he had." It is commonly the case that a mother exerts a more powerful influence over her children during their earlier years than their father, and it is of the highest importance, therefore, that the maternal influence should be of the right kind. The four children described in the Allegory had a mother whose influence was of the right kind. When their father left the City of Destruction they remained there, but when she left it they went with her. Take care, then, ye Christian mothers, that you do your best to influence

your children aright while they are most susceptible, of your influence. Teach them the truth as it is in Jesus, and endeavour to persuade them to regulate their lives thereby. Don't dream that there will be time enough for this when the season of childhood is past. If you desire them to be devoted Christian men and women, seek to bring them to the Saviour while they are boys and girls. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Childhood is the Christian parent's seed-time ; and if this precious season be not turned to good account, the negligent mother will have no reason for surprise if she lives to see her sons and daughters devoting their manhood and womanhood to the service of Satan.

3. The account of this family of pilgrims illustrates the possibility of juvenile piety. The children were pilgrims as truly as their parents. It is encouraging for children themselves, and

encouraging for their parents and pastors and teachers, that the Saviour has said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." The Scriptures contain various notices of children who truly served God in ancient times. It is indisputable that many children love and serve Him in the present day. They cannot be theologians, of course, but they can regard their Creator with filial fear. They cannot understand (as indeed who can ?) the philosophy of the Atonement, but they can repose an affectionate confidence in Him who made it. They cannot be expected to exemplify their religion precisely like older Christians, but they can exemplify it in a manner peculiar to themselves, and (bless God !) they often do.

v.

The Christian Maiden may next engage our attention. Her name was Mercy, and her

character was a very beautiful one, and is very sweetly delineated. She was Christiana's neighbour in the City of Destruction, and became her companion in the way of life. Perhaps Bunyan thought of Ruth leaving Moab with Naomi and setting out in her society for the land of Canaan when he described Mercy as leaving the City of Destruction with Christiana, and going with her towards the Celestial City. Christiana did not indeed seek to discourage Mercy, as Naomi sought to discourage Ruth, from becoming her fellow-pilgrim ; but the one pair reminds us of the other nevertheless. But if the manner in which Mercy became a pilgrim reminds us of Ruth, her general conduct reminds us of another woman mentioned in the Scriptures, viz., Dorcas. Like Dorcas, she was very charitable, and consecrated her industry to the service of the poor. This industry, together with her beauty, attracted the attention of

various persons who sought her hand in marriage, and there is a description of one of her suitors which must not be overlooked. This was Mr. Brisk, by which name we are doubtless to understand that he was what is called a good man of business. He was also a man of some breeding, or, as we might now say, a very gentlemanly person. Moreover, he was a professor of religion. Many of the maidens among our acquaintance would assuredly think an offer of marriage from such a man worth having. Many a professed Christian maiden would not hesitate to accept such an offer. But Mercy was not so ready to become Mrs. Brisk. She made inquiries about her suitor, tested the value of his religious profession, ascertained that it was worthless, and refused therefore to encourage him. Some time afterwards she became the wife of her friend's eldest son, being determined to marry only in the Lord. I have touched upon this

matter very lightly, but the lesson it suggests is of very high importance. As one who gave up her old home, her old companions, her time and property, and her matrimonial prospects, for the sake of her Divine Master, Mercy may well be held up as an example to the youthful maidens of our day. Those youthful maidens experience temptations peculiar to themselves. The fashions and attractions of the world speak to them with peculiar power. But our notion of the angels is derived from what we have seen of persons like Mercy, and those women who consecrate their youth and beauty to God thereby do much to render His service attractive to those about them.

VI.

It remains to notice the Christian fellowship described in Bunyan's book. That fellowship is very largely exhibited as one to which two classes of pilgrims are parties, viz., the strong

and weak disciples of Christ. On the one hand were old Mr. Honest, Mr. Valiant-for-Truth, and Mr. Stand-fast. On the other hand were Mr. Feeble-mind, Mr. Ready-to-Halt, Mr. Despondency, and his daughter Much-afraid. These pilgrims, whose names are of course indicative of their respective characters, were successively brought into fellowship with Christiana and her sons, and with Mercy. Thus there was a group of thirteen pilgrims in the road to the Celestial City, and the account given of this group may be considered with advantage.

1. The Christian fellowship thus portrayed is very profitable to the weaker parties concerned. There can be no doubt about this, and proof is therefore unnecessary. But it may be necessary to remind those whom they concern of the apostle's words respecting the duty of the strong in relation to the weak disciples of Christ: "We then that are strong

ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." We are not to sneer at the relations of Mr. Feeble-mind when we meet them. We are not to be impatient with those who resemble Mr. Ready-to-Halt, Mr. Despondency, and Mistress Much-afraid. If our spiritual strength and courage are greater than theirs, we are able to be of service to them, and it is therefore our duty to render them such service as we can. The superstitions of one, and the hyper-puritanical scruples of another, must not occasion us to despise or avoid those Christians who exhibit them. This is generally very well understood by those who are really strong in the faith. The man who is poisoned with spiritual pride may deem himself at liberty to despise one and another of the little ones who believe in the Saviour, notwithstanding the solemn words of the Saviour Himself on the subject. But the man who is strong in the Lord will employ his

strength in helping the weaker disciples of Christ who are brought into companionship with himself in the way of life. Those weaker disciples have abundant reason to be thankful for the help they thus receive. The Christian fellowship is a great blessing to them. It is the Divinely-appointed means for aiding them in many ways from time to time while they are in the road which leads from this world to that which is to come.

2. This fellowship is not only advantageous to the weaker persons who have part in it, however, but is also of great advantage to their stronger companions. This may not be obvious, but it is true. "It is more blessed to give than to receive," and these "words of the Lord Jesus" are very applicable to our present subject. For example: a Christian man is largely endowed with those Divine gifts and impulses which peculiarly fit certain servants of the Saviour for the

ministry of the gospel. Is it not clear that the exercise of these gifts and the gratification of these impulses in the work of a preacher and pastor will not only be a blessing to his weaker brethren, but also to himself? This work provides a healthful outlet for what is in the man. It is not well that strong spirits should be occupied too exclusively with themselves. It is well that men should not look only upon their own things, but also upon the things of their neighbour. The strong not only help the weak, moreover, to their own present advantage: they have also the prospect of a rich reward. Christ reckons whatsoever they do for the good of their weaker fellow-pilgrims as done unto Himself, and this alone will suffice to show how great is their privilege in having the fellowship of those who in some respects are inferior to themselves.

3. This fellowship is beneficial to all who

regard it aright. It is seen that the weak disciples of Christ are enabled to pursue their pilgrimage as successfully as their stronger brethren. They are often menaced with destruction, but never destroyed. They are often on the verge of ruin, but reach the Celestial City in safety nevertheless. They are feeble-minded, ready to halt, sunk in despondency, and much afraid, while some of their companions are signally buoyant and magnanimous, but they accomplish their pilgrimage as successfully as those companions. They often have occasion to inquire, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?" but they hope in God, and find Him to be the health of their countenance and their God. They may be often heard to sing,—

"Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causeth anxious thought :
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"

but as often do they hear with good effect the Master's demand, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" The truth is that these weak disciples are aided by the same Omnipotence as that which helps the stoutest pilgrim on his way. They have the same Saviour as their stronger brethren. That Saviour's grace is necessary to the strongest pilgrim in the way of life, and sufficient for the weakest. Salvation is of the Lord. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. By grace ye are saved, and therefore—

"Now let the feeble all be strong,
And make Jehovah's arm your song ;
His shield is spread o'er every saint,
And thus supported, who shall faint?"

THE PILGRIMS
AND THEIR ACQUAINTANCE.



IV.

THE PILGRIMS AND THEIR ACQUAINTANCE.

“Ye shall know them by their fruits.”—*Matt.* vii. 16.



OUR Lord was speaking of false teachers when He thus expressed Himself, but His language is applicable to persons of every class. It is desirable that pilgrims to the Celestial City should be able to form a correct opinion of those whose acquaintance they make from time to time. They know that “evil communications corrupt good manners.” They know that there are many plausible persons who will court their companionship from various corrupt motives. They know that Satan himself is frequently disguised as an

angel of light. How, then, shall they test those they meet so as to walk wisely in relation to them? The text supplies the answer to this question. "Ye shall know them by their fruits." An exposition of this language may be found, by those who need one, in the Epistle to the Galatians (v. 19-23). The pilgrims described in Bunyan's Allegory are represented as making the acquaintance of various other persons; and the "fruits" of these persons were worldliness, heresy, hypocrisy, apostasy, and infatuation. You will see, therefore, that by the acquaintance of the pilgrims I do not mean their fellow-pilgrims, but rather certain men and women who had no share in the blessings they enjoyed.

I.

Among the acquaintance of the pilgrims were certain *WORLDLINGS* of the most pronounced type. They professed to be nothing

else, and were ready at any time to pour contempt upon the pilgrim's name. There are many such persons to be met with in every age. Their own hopes are bounded by the present world, and they therefore live as though it were the only world in existence.

One such person was Obstinate. When Christian fled with his burden from the City of Destruction a great commotion was aroused among his old neighbours. Some of them mocked, others threatened, and others entreated him to return. Two of them started in pursuit, and Obstinate was one of the two. It was in vain, however, that he sought to make Christian return; but, on the other hand, it was in vain that Christian urged him to become a pilgrim like himself. In a little while, therefore, they parted company, and Obstinate went back to his own place expressing the greatest contempt for those who adopted the pilgrim's life. There are many

worldlings in our day who have obstinately interfered to the full extent of their power with the course taken by their better-disposed neighbours, and have still more obstinately refused to take that course themselves. They stubbornly persist in remaining in the City of Destruction, and will therefore be destroyed with an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.

The flight of Christian's widow from the doomed city excited quite as much commotion as his own. Some of its female inhabitants assembled at the house of Mrs. Timorous to discuss the fantastical conduct of Christiana, as they deemed it. Mrs. Batt's-eyes, Mrs. Inconsiderate, Mrs. Light-mind, and Mrs. Know-nothing had much to say on the subject. The names of these women signify that they could not see, or would not look, beyond this present evil world, and that they were content with such pleasures as it affords.

Women can say very hard things about each other when they choose, and some such things were said about Christiana by the gossips assembled to discuss her departure. Those who display any anxiety about their own spiritual welfare may expect to be derided by their worldly neighbours, but let no one who purposes to become a pilgrim be discouraged by the derision of such persons. Rather remember the cheering words of the Saviour, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."

Another of these pronounced worldlings was Atheist, who met Christian and Hopeful when they were well on their way to the Celestial City. He asked them whither they were going; and when they had told him, fell into a very great laughter, and assured them that there was no such place in existence as the city they sought. They told him that they

knew better; and he then informed them that he had once been of their opinion, but was now satisfied that there was nothing better than to enjoy the good things of this present world as much as possible. Not being able to persuade them to abandon their quest after the Celestial City, he went away, laughing at their credulity. Atheists are apt to affect an air of superiority in the presence of Christians which very ill becomes them. They may, of course, assert as roundly as they please that there is no God, that there is no other world than the one of which we have present experience, and that our hope of heaven is altogether without foundation. But it is impossible for them to prove this assertion, while, on the other hand, the assertions made in the Bible are sustained by evidence which many of the most intelligent members of our race have accepted as conclusive after the most searching examination.

There is the internal evidence of the Bible itself, there is the evidence of history, and there is the evidence supplied by the experience of those who have taken the precious volume as their guide. It may be that there are not very many professed atheists in the society we frequent, but there are many practical atheists whose conversation and influence are prejudicial to all who ignorantly heed them.

II.

Two of the pilgrims' acquaintance were HERETICS. One of them was Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, and the other Ignorance. These two persons were different enough in some respects. The one was older than Christian, and the other younger. The one was a scholar, and the other an unlearned man. The one was a man of some position, and the other an altogether obscure person. Yet they had one thing in common, and that was their

heresy. Mr. Worldly-Wiseman was as ignorant of the way of salvation as Ignorance himself, and they had both adopted the same false doctrine on the subject.

1. Christian met Mr. Worldly-Wiseman when he was himself very ignorant of spiritual things. It was just after he had been helped out of the Slough of Despond that this gentleman accosted him. Mr. Worldly-Wiseman saw at a glance how troubled Christian was with his burden, and spoke to him in a very friendly way on the subject. He advised him to get rid of his burden, and told him how he might do so. He assured him that he had been misdirected when told to make for the Wicket Gate in order to be delivered from it, and that he would not have been troubled with it at all had he not meddled with things too high for him in seeking to act as the Bible directs. However, it was not too late, he said, to remedy

the mischief thus done. He pointed to a village called Morality, between which and the place where they stood was a high hill called Sinai; and told Christian that the first house he would come to after passing that hill was that of Mr. Legality. Mr. Legality was skilled in the removal of burdens like his; and if he were not at home, his son Civility would be able to take off the burden as well as the old gentleman himself. Mr. Worldly-Wiseman went on to say that, when his burden had been removed, it would be as well for Christian to remain in that village. It would be needless to go further. It was not desirable that he should return to the City of Destruction. His wife and children might be induced to settle with him in a place where they could live so cheaply and respectably.

Do you understand the drift of this plausible advice? It is simply that a poor sin-

ner, burdened with the consciousness of guilt and condemnation, has no need to betake himself to Christ for relief, but that it is enough for him to obey the Divine law in order to escape from present spiritual trouble and future misery. By Mr. Legality we may understand that pretended obedience to God's law which is so common; and by his son Civility we may understand that social decorum which passes for such obedience. There are many who are apt to give Mr. Worldly-Wiseman's advice to those whose consciences have been aroused by the Word of God. They do not mean to mislead, but are themselves misled. They are blind leaders of the blind. A man may be wise after the flesh, and yet lamentably ignorant of spiritual things. It is one thing to be a worldly-wise man, and quite another to be wise unto salvation. The town of Carnal Policy, in which Mr. Worldly-Wiseman resided, is very popu-

lous, and its people are abroad in all directions. They write brilliant articles and fascinating tales in the serials which constitute so marked a feature in the literature of our day. They produce learned works of a more permanent description. They converse cleverly and attractively in society. They deliver polished discourses from many of the pulpits of Christendom. Their doctrine is that vice is to be avoided, that morality and respectability are to be cultivated, that what they call fanaticism and enthusiasm should be eschewed, and that the idea of a Saviour whose atoning death was necessary as an expiation for our sin should be flung to the winds. They acknowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ was a good man, inasmuch as He kept the law, and they assure us that all we have to do is to imitate His example in this respect.

2. By the time that Christian met with

Ignorance he was in no danger of being misled by any such doctrine and advice as that of Mr. Worldly-Wiseman. Ignorance is described as a very brisk lad, a native of the country of Conceit, who came into the road wherein the pilgrims walked by way of a little crooked lane. Christian asked him whence he came and whither he went, and he replied that he was bound for the Celestial City. Christian then asked him what reason he had to expect admission at the gate of that city, and he replied with all possible confidence that he should do as well as other good people. He knew his Lord's will, lived well, paid his debts, prayed, fasted, paid tithes, and gave alms. His language resembled that of the Pharisee in our Saviour's parable, who went up into the temple to pray, and thanked God for his superiority to other men. This language, however, did not impose on Christian, who pointed out to

him that, as he had not come into the way through the Wicket Gate, he was in danger of being treated as a thief and a robber at his journey's end. But this put Ignorance upon his mettle. "Gentlemen," said he, addressing himself to Christian and his companion, "ye be utter strangers to me ; I know you not. Be content to follow the religion of your country, and I will follow the religion of mine." With a few more stiff words of this kind, he fell behind the pilgrims and followed at a slower pace. But they, being sorry for him, contrived to let him come up with them again, and then renewed the conversation. It was, however, of no use. He was as wise in his own conceit as ever, and they had to allow him to fall behind them once more, after he had reproached them for their whims with as much contempt as Mr. Worldly-Wiseman could have displayed. There are several

things concerning this man which deserve to be particularly noticed.

The first is his self-righteousness. He had no sense of needing Christ. He supposed that he would get into the Celestial City without passing through the Wicket Gate. He had not learned the lesson which our Lord taught by saying, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in he shall be saved. . . . I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." For any one to do as he did—for any one, *i. e.*, to suppose that it is well with him before making application to Christ for his salvation—is to exhibit self-righteousness indeed!

The self-complacency of Ignorance is the second thing. He deemed himself superior to Christian and Hopeful. He affected a freedom of thought and a comprehensive charity of which they were incapable. It would be all right at last—right for him

and right for them—notwithstanding the differences which they (poor narrow-minded men!) thought so important. The spirit thus displayed by him is one that we often have to encounter in actual life. Many persons affect to believe that all creeds are more or less true, and that all the methods which men take to propitiate the Deity are more or less efficacious. It will be all right with all parties by-and-by. Only bigots doubt this. Liberal men who take broad views of things rejoice in it. Now this spurious charity may excite the admiration of certain classes, but the true Christian will not be misled by it. He remembers those words of Holy Writ: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

The self-deception of Ignorance is the third thing. He cherished an unfounded

hope that all was well with him, and would be well. This hope animated him all along his journey, and was not even quenched in the article of death. When he reached the river side he found a ferryman named Vain Hope, who took him over to the other side, so that his passage was far less difficult than that of Christian and Hopeful and other true pilgrims. This illustrates the language of the psalmist respecting the wicked: "There are no bands in their death." It is pleasing to hear that a professed Christian has had a peaceful death. It is sad to hear that any such person has exhibited anguish of spirit in his dying moments. But the worth of a man's profession is not to be judged of by his behaviour in immediate prospect of dissolution. "Ye shall know them by their fruits" is a saying which applies much more to the life of men than to their death; and he who desires to die the death of the right-

eous should live the life of the righteous, or, in other words, should walk by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The fate of Ignorance is the last thing to be noticed. Having crossed the river, he ascended to the gate of the Celestial City and began to knock for admission there. But there was no admission for him. By command of the King he was bound hand and foot, and flung into an abyss prepared for the reception of sentenced rebels,—an abyss from which there is no escape. Take heed that you are not found self-righteous, self-complacent, and self-deceived, or you also will be self-destroyed by such perversity. “If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.”

III.

Among the pilgrims' acquaintance were certain HYPOCRITES. True Christians generally do become acquainted with some such persons,

and it is not a very unusual thing for their hypocrisy to be exposed. That hypocrisy is very mischievous. It brings discredit on the cause of Christ. It fills the mouths of men of a certain class with excuses for their own misconduct. But it should always be remembered that hypocrisy is an evidence of the existence of genuine religion. There would be no counterfeit coins if genuine coins were not in circulation. There would be no pretended pilgrims to the Celestial City if true pilgrims were not on the road thither. There would be no hypocrites if there were no true servants of the Most High.

Soon after Christian had passed the Cross and Sepulchre he saw two men come tumbling over the wall into the road which he was travelling. Their names were Formalist and Hypocrisy. Having asked them why they had not come in at the Wicket Gate, he was told by them that it was the custom of their

countrymen to do as they had done, and had been so for more than a thousand years. He then expressed an opinion that such an account would not prove satisfactory, but they began to revile him and fell somewhat away from him. It was when they came to the Hill Difficulty that the difference between these men and the true pilgrim appeared. The Narrow Way lay right up the hill, and Christian began to ascend it, therefore, as best he might. But there were two other ways at the foot of the hill, one going round its base to the right hand, and the other to the left. These roads were called respectively Danger and Destruction; and accordingly, Formalist taking one of them, and Hypocrisy the other, neither of them was seen again in the only way which leads to the right hand of God. No hypocrite likes to encounter the difficulties incident to a life of true piety. True Christians do not shrink

from these difficulties, but pretended Christians have no sufficient motive to deal with them aright. The object of the hypocrite is to impose on his fellow-men; but the course he adopts for this purpose is dangerous and will end in destruction.

On the other side of the Hill Difficulty, as Christian and Faithful walked on together, they fell in with a tall man named Talkative, who was more comely at a distance than when at hand. He told them that he was on his way to the Heavenly Country and would be glad to have their companionship. He talked so well that Faithful was presently much pleased with him, but Christian happened to know who and what he was, and gave his friend a very sad account of him. Talkative was only talkative. He could talk about unseemly matters or about religion, and could talk best when most in liquor. He talked about religion exceedingly well until

closely pressed with home questions. He talked of prayer, repentance, and the new birth. But he was one of those who say and do not. He was a saint abroad and a devil at home. He was a churl and a tyrant in his own family. He was ever seeking to overreach those with whom he did business, and was doing his best to train his sons to act in the same fraudulent manner. He had caused many to stumble and fall by his wicked life, and was likely to injure others by the same means. When Talkative found that his true character was known he soon relieved the two pilgrims of his presence. I need scarcely say that there are many of his kindred to be met with in these days. They can talk wonderfully well on religious subjects in the pulpit and elsewhere. Those who don't know them are pleased to hear them discourse concerning religious doctrine, experience, practice, and prospects. But those

who do know them—who know what they are at home and in business—hear them, or refuse to hear them, with indignant disgust.

When Hopeful had taken Faithful's place as Christian's companion, the two pilgrims fell in with a Mr. By-ends of Fair-speech, and this man wanted to become their associate. He was a man of property, and had obtained his money by looking one way and rowing another. He liked the company of professors and only differed from the stricter sort in two respects: he never went against wind and tide, and was always most zealous when religion was shod in silver slippers and walked in the sunshine while the people applauded. The pilgrims apprised him, however, that he could not be their companion unless he was prepared to go against wind and tide, and to be seen with religion when clad in rags and laden with irons. But Mr. By-ends objected to this. "You must not

lord it over my faith," said he. "I shall never desert my old principles." It is clear that this man only made a profession of religion in order to profit by it in a pecuniary sense, and was ready to abandon or conceal it whenever it threatened to become unprofitable or dangerous. The independence and steadfastness of character which he affected was belied by his conduct: it was not wonderful, therefore, that the pilgrims presently left him behind. I cannot refrain from the remark that the professed pilgrims of our time are not always willing to let men like Mr. By-ends quit their society. The shameful truth is that when a rich man shows any disposition to associate with them they are only too apt to take for granted that he is all that he ought to be, even when it is obvious to others that his wealth is the mammon of unrighteousness and his speech the language of deceit. Mr. By-ends was not long left to

himself, you may be sure. He was overtaken by three of his old schoolfellows, Messrs. Hold-the-world, Money-love, and Save-all. The four men were glad of each other's society. They were congenial companions, and their conversation indicated their covetousness even better than their names could do. They were unanimous in the opinion that men may righteously affect religious zeal in order to secure worldly gain. Their fate was such as to afford a serious warning to all who profess religion. They were attracted by a silver mine, and went out of the way to obtain the wealth it promised, but were seen no more. There is no harm in getting money, or in trying to get it, so long as men keep in the right path, but those who seek worldly wealth by iniquitous means do thereby provoke their own destruction.

IV.

There were several APOSTATES among the pilgrims' acquaintance. Bunyan did not mean, in describing these renegades, to teach anything at variance with that doctrine which has proved so cheering to many pilgrims—the final perseverance of the saints. When apostasy is final it is a sign that those guilty of it were never the subjects of genuine conversion to God.

One of these apostates was named Pliable. He ran out of the City of Destruction with Obstinate, in order, if possible, to bring Christian back. They failed, but Pliable did not return with Obstinate. He was so much impressed with the account that Christian gave of the good he hoped to obtain by going on pilgrimage that he resolved to go also. But, though easily persuaded to set out, he was as easily discouraged from persevering in the right way. He fell into the Slough of Despond, and

that was enough for him. He scrambled out as he best could on the side nearest to his own house, and returned thither to find that he had obtained nothing better by his conduct than the contempt of his neighbours.

At the top of the Hill Difficulty, Christian met two men who were running amain, and he accosted them. Their names were Timorous and Mistrust, and they told him that they had been on the way to the Celestial City, but had turned back because of some lions they had seen. Their cowardice was contagious, and Christian also might have turned back, but for the reflection that, whatever danger there was in going forward, there was certain destruction in going back. He therefore allowed them to go without him, notwithstanding his own dread of the lions which had so terrified them.

Christian and Hopeful were startled one day by a dreadful spectacle. They met a man named Turn-away, whom seven devils had

bound with seven strong cords and were carrying to perdition. On his back was written, "Wanton professor and damnable apostate." This description is founded, of course, on our Saviour's language in Matt. xii. The account given of this man in the second part of the Allegory is that he came from the town of Apostasy and longed to be back there, that he resisted the attempts of Evangelist to keep him in the right path, and that he angrily refused to contemplate the Cross and Sepulchre of Jesus Christ.

Christian and Hopeful were both acquainted with a person named Temporary, who dwelt under the same roof with Turn-back. He had been very anxious about his soul at one time; but having become acquainted with Save-self, his anxiety ceased. The two pilgrims had some deeply interesting conversation about the reason why such men wander from the true path, and the manner in which they do so, but for the

particulars of that conversation I must refer you to Bunyan's book.

The person who called the attention of Mr. By-ends and his company to the silver mine where they perished was named Demas, and is described as gentlemanlike. He had once been the associate of pilgrims, but was now their tempter. He would have tempted Christian and his companion from the King's highway, but they knew the danger, and rebuked him for his wickedness. Bunyan was thinking, when he described the conduct of this apostate, of those words of the apostle, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved the present world."

Thus we have the cases of half-a-dozen persons who were guilty of apostasy. Their apostasy was occasioned in various ways. That of Pliable was occasioned by the very first depression of spirits he experienced in relation to his own everlasting welfare; that of Mistrust and Timorous by their cowardice; that of Turn-

away by his love of the sin which did so easily beset him; that of Temporary by the returning slumber of his conscience; and that of Demas by his love of the good things of the present life. But the grand cause of this apostasy in every case was the same, viz., lack of faith. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith." The pilgrim walks by faith, and therefore perseveres in the Way of Life. A backslider he may sometimes be, an apostate never. Faith is like gold: a little of it is of great value and can accomplish great things. The faith which is comparable only with a grain of mustard seed can remove mountains if that be necessary. It is not said that great faith is essential to salvation, but "he that believeth shall be saved." "Lord, increase our faith!"

V.

The acquaintance of the pilgrims included some persons who may be most fittingly described

as FOOLS. I call them fools because such persons are constantly described as such in the Word of God. Their conduct is foolish in the extreme, but not more foolish than common.

Simple, Sloth, and Presumption were persons of this class. Christian saw them asleep with fetters on their heels as he was in the way. He sought to awake them, tendered them what help he could, and urged them to go with him. But Simple said, "I see no danger;" Sloth said, "Yet a little more sleep;" and Presumption said, "Every fat must stand on its own bottom." They were all three asleep again very soon. Christian therefore left them where they were, and lo! by the time Christiana reached that place, they were hanged in chains.

Vain-confidence was another of these fools. On one occasion, when two of the pilgrims had wandered from the right way, they saw this man before them. They called after him

and asked whither the way in which he was walking led. "To the Celestial Gate," he replied. They followed him, therefore, with some degree of confidence; but the night came on, they lost sight of their guide, and presently heard him fall into a deep pit, so that he was dashed to pieces, to their own very great terror.

Heedless and Too-bold belonged to the same class. They were found sleeping in an harbour on the Enchanted Ground by Christiana and her companions, who sought to arouse them in vain. They talked in their sleep, and that was all. "I will pay you when I take my money," said one. "I will fight so long as I can hold my sword in my hand," said the other.

What shall be said to those who deserve these names? They may or may not be industrious and energetic as regards the affairs of the present world, but they are profoundly

lethargic as regards those of the world to come. The language of their hearts would seem to be, "Why should we trouble ourselves about what is future and unseen? Who knows the truth in relation thereunto? We shall most likely be all right at last. It will be found that God is not so strict as people say He is. Meanwhile it is for us to do what we can to promote our own worldly interests, and to enjoy the present life as much as possible." If, indeed, this is the language of any of you, let me close this discourse with a rehearsal of the apostolic admonition, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!"

THE PILGRIMS AND THEIR ERRORS.

V.

THE PILGRIMS AND THEIR ERRORS.

"All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way."—*Isa.* liii. 6.



THE errors of God's people are worthy of consideration on various accounts. They illustrate the deep depravity of the human heart, *e.g.*; showing that man will not only rebel in spite of God's law, but also in spite of God's grace. It ought to overwhelm us with a wholesome distrust of the fallen nature we share as often as we think of David's conduct to Uriah, or Peter's denial of his Master, or the conduct of those Christians in Corinth which elicited remonstrance and rebuke from the Apostle Paul. Those who duly regard the errors of former pilgrims

will neither be disposed to place over-much confidence in their own virtue, nor in that of other Christians. Not in vain will it be said to them, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Not in vain will it be said, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Moreover, the errors confessed in the text illustrate the Divine forbearance. That forbearance is even more wonderful than our depravity; and there is no Christian who has not reason to sing with the deepest thankfulness that familiar verse—

"If e'er I go astray,
He doth my soul reclaim,
And lead me in His own right way,
For His Most Holy Name."

To err is to wander; and Bunyan's account of the pilgrims' progress would have been defective indeed had it contained no account of any wanderings on their part from the way

of life. No man, however, knew better than the great allegorist how prone pilgrims are to transgress ; and under his guidance we may now turn our attention to this matter. There are principally four errors of which we shall have to think, with each of which Christian, the pilgrim whose character and course are most fully delineated, is chargeable, but not Christian alone.

I.

The first of these errors was that which led Christian to Sinai in search of peace. He was anxious to get rid of the heavy burden, or troubled conscience, which oppressed him, and took this course because he had been assured that he could obtain relief at the first house he would come to after passing the hill. Perhaps so ; but then he could not pass the hill, which assumed so threatening an aspect that he stood quaking for fear at its base, unable to proceed or return, while his burden

became heavier than before. If you have had no such experience as this, the explanation is that you belong to one of two classes which may be briefly described.

The first of these classes consists of those Christians who have had grace to understand from the first that men cannot be justified by works of law. They have never hoped to obtain the peace of God by their own obedience to His commandments. Christiana and Mercy belonged to this class. They did not turn aside to Mount Sinai, but went direct to the Wicket Gate, in search of the spiritual blessings they needed. Thus it is with all well-instructed persons. Their hopes turn from the law to the gospel, from Moses to Christ, and are not disappointed.

The other class consists of those who have never realised the true character of the Divine law. They get past Sinai because they are blind to its menacing aspect, and deaf to

its thunders. They get rid of their burdens (such as they are) in the manner described by Mr. Worldly-Wiseman. They fail to perceive that the commandment is exceeding broad. They suppose that if they abstain from certain overt acts, attend certain religious services, and perform certain plain duties, no more can be required of them. They will admit, when pressed, that they are sinners like other men, but regard their sinfulness as an infirmity rather than anything worse, and have much to say in vague terms respecting the mercy of God. They have no adequate sense of their danger because they have no such sense of their own guilt; and no adequate sense of their guilt because they have no such sense of what the law requires.

Poor Christian belonged to neither of these classes. He did therefore attempt to get peace by his own obedience to God's law,

but presently perceived that the attempt was as perilous as it was hopeless. The law was revealed to him so clearly that, had that been all, he must have perished in despair. But that was not all. The gospel was made known to him, and, humbled but encouraged, he applied for aid to that Saviour whom it describes.

The experience of Hopeful resembled that of his friend in this respect, though it is not set forth in the same way. He related that experience to his companion as they walked through the Enchanted Ground. He acknowledged his former delight in the things which tend to destroy the soul, such as rioting, revelling, drinking, swearing, lying, uncleanness, and Sabbath-breaking. But at length he was troubled by the conviction that "the end of these things is death." This conviction was brought about by the words and life and death of the martyr

Faithful, and also by the language and behaviour of Christian himself, in Vanity Fair, which was Hopeful's native place. It was a conviction which he could not shake off, though he tried to do so. The effect was that he tried to amend his life, just as Christian had gone to Mount Sinai. He abandoned his vices and evil companions; and was found praying, reading, weeping, and speaking the truth to his neighbours, as he had never done before. At first he was much pleased with this self-reformation, but was presently in trouble again, for he found in his Bible such sayings as these: "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." "When ye shall have done all those things, say, We are unprofitable." He reflected that "if a man runs a hundred pounds into the shopkeeper's debt, and after that shall pay for all that he shall fetch;

yet if this old debt stands still in the book uncrossed, for that the shopkeeper may sue him, and cast him into prison till he shall pay the debt." Applying this to his own relationship to the Divine law, Hopeful felt that it was impossible to obtain salvation by his own merit, and was glad to find that it might be obtained by the merit of One who had done all things well, even Jesus Christ our Lord.

Saul of Tarsus, Martin Luther, Bunyan himself, and many other pilgrims have fallen into precisely the same error, but happily they were reclaimed. Those who persist in it must perish. They are wandering from the only way of salvation. The shadow of Sinai being upon them, they are within range of that dreadful curse which thunders from its summit, "Cursed is he that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." If any of you are

trembling in that shadow, come forth! Linger not, but come away!

II.

Another error was that unseasonable slumber into which Christian drifted when half way up the Hill Difficulty.

The scene of that slumber was a pleasant Arbour erected in that place for the refreshment of pilgrims by their Prince. This Arbour may be regarded as denoting the Sanctuary, the services of which have been ordained for the resting and refreshment of those who do battle with the difficulties of the Christian life. But it was not designed that these services should lull the soul to sleep. It is by no means satisfactory to see some who attend the sanctuary overtaken by physical slumber, though that may sometimes be excusable. But those who abandon themselves to spiritual slumber there are

without excuse. Nevertheless such slumber is very common, and it may be that some who attend our own place of worship, and keep their eyes and ears wide open in it, are lost in spiritual slumber; for the body may be wide awake and the spirit fast asleep at the same time.

The cause of Christian's slumber in this Arbour was the spiritual self-indulgence to which he there gave way. He pleased himself by reading the Roll and reviewing the Robe which had lately been bestowed on him by the Shining Ones who met him at the Cross. Fixing his attention too exclusively on these things, and forgetting that he had to climb the remainder of the hill, he fell asleep. It is well for Christians to be reminded as often as they attend the Sanctuary of the advantages they derive from the ministry of the Son and the Spirit of their God. But if they so dwell upon what has thus been done for them, and

done in them, as to forget what should be done by them ; in other words, if they allow their attention to be so absorbed by their spiritual privileges as to render them neglectful of their spiritual duties, it is not well, but the reverse.

The cure for this slumber was soon applied, however. "As he was sleeping there came one to him, and awaked him, saying, 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard ; consider her ways, and be wise.' And with that Christian suddenly started up, and sped him on his way, and went apace till he came to the top of the hill." We learn from this that, if Christians are apt to allow themselves to sink into spiritual slumber in the sanctuary, it is there also that they are apt to be awakened. There the Word of God is habitually proclaimed, and the effect thereby produced on them shows that they are Christians indeed. Other slumberers are not so readily aroused. They are not like Simple, Sloth, and Presumption, who would not be

disturbed; nor do they resemble Heedless and Too-bold in that particular. On the contrary, they hear a Voice, blending with that of the preacher, perhaps, but a more majestic Voice than his, saying, "It is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Whole communities of slumbering Christians have sometimes been aroused by the cry, "Awake! awake! put on thy strength, O Zion!" Oh, that some such cry might now be heard by many slumbering Christians, so that their sinful lethargy might be swept away! "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise," and that quickly, for there is work for thee to do!

The consequence of Christian's spiritual slumber was the loss of comfort on his part. He did not perish in his sleep, but he did lose his Roll. That Roll assured him of a welcome at his journey's end, and he dared not pursue his way without it. No sooner, therefore, had he

discovered his loss than he was plunged in deep distress. He retraced his steps with tears and sighs and self-reproaches, seeking anxiously for his lost treasure. Happily his search was successful: he found his Roll where he had lost it, and then addressed himself once more to the pilgrimage which lay before him. But time had been lost. The sun had gone down. The discomfort of walking in a difficult and dangerous road in the darkness had to be needlessly experienced. Now all this is most instructive to those who know what it means. The assurance of salvation is lost by the mere process of contemplating it in an indolent manner. The Christian who says, "I am assured of a happy entrance into the Celestial City at the end of my journey, and will therefore diligently pursue the way which leads thither as marked out for me in the Word of God," does well. But the Christian who says, "I am assured of a happy entrance into the

Celestial City at the end of my journey, and need not, therefore, take any present pains to get there," will soon find that the assurance on which he thus presumes has vanished. Nor will he recover his treasure without a search which will be attended with sorrow and anxiety such as any of us may well shrink from when warned respecting it.

The manner in which this sinful slumber was overruled for good must not be disregarded. It is asserted in the Word of God that "all things work together for good to them that love God," and even the errors of such persons are no exceptions to this rule. The recollection of Christian's sleep in this Arbour was of service to himself and others on several occasions. Thus, as he and Hopeful went through the Enchanted Ground, the air of which had a natural tendency to make strangers drowsy, his companion proposed that they should lie down and refresh themselves with a nap. But

Christian knew the danger of sleeping there, and proposed that they should keep themselves awake with good discourse. Accordingly they did so, and Hopeful related the story of his conversion, to which reference has already been made. When this story was ended they were well on their way. Is there no hint here for those Christians on whom worldly influences are exerting a somnolent effect? Such persons ought not to plead, as they are prone to do, that their many secular engagements prevent them from holding that intercourse with their fellow Christians which they acknowledge to be a means of grace. They ought rather to seek such intercourse because they are thus engaged. The communion of saints, in religious conversation and otherwise, has a tendency to counteract the deadening influence of mundane pursuits. Christiana and her companions remembered Christian's slumber in the Arbour with advantage. They also entered

that Arbour, and made good use of the accommodation it afforded too, but were somewhat afflicted by drowsiness there, as he had been before them. They remembered his experience, however, and turned it to such good account that they lost nothing which was not soon recovered. We ought in like manner to profit by the errors of those who have gone before us. If the warning, "Woe to them which are at ease in Zion!" was verified in their case, that warning ought to have the more effect as far as we are concerned. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober."

We must not turn from the error into which Christian thus fell when he abandoned himself to spiritual slumber without some allusion to the somewhat parallel experience of another pilgrim as related by himself. The story of Little-faith, which Christian narrated to Hopeful, is told with marvellous skill. This Little-faith

was a pilgrim who resigned himself to slumber in a very dangerous place. He awoke to find himself attacked by three sturdy thieves. They robbed him of his money, felled him to the earth, and took to their heels at the sound of some one approaching, fearing that it might be Great-grace, the King's Champion. These thieves were brothers, and they were named respectively Faint-heart, Mistrust, and Guilt. Hopeful thought they might have been easily beaten off by Little-faith, but his more experienced companion assured him that many had deemed them cowards, but that few had found it so in the hour of trial. David, Heman, Jeremiah, and Peter, had been roughly handled by them. He himself had escaped their hands with difficulty. Great-grace had conquered them, but they had left their marks upon his face. Their King is at their whistle, and they are such formidable foes, that pilgrims ought always to be well armed, and never without

a convoy. Little-faith had neglected these precautions, and the result was that he was wounded and robbed as we have seen, so that the remainder of his pilgrimage was far more painful and distressing than it need have been. The thieves had not, indeed, deprived him of his Certificate (which corresponded with Christian's Roll) and other jewels, but had taken his silver. In other words, they had not destroyed his prospective blessedness, but had destroyed his present comfort. The lesson taught by his experience is that spiritual indolence is productive of guilty fear and doubt; and that if we would be happy in the service of God, we must be diligent in it. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do with thy might," not only because there is "no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest," but because "the hand of the diligent maketh rich" in that "peace of God which passeth all understanding," and fills the

heart of the pilgrim who possesses it with strong consolation, and enables him to rejoice even in tribulation with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.

III.

Another error to which pilgrims are prone was that which Christian and Hopeful committed in getting over the Stile which led to By-path Meadow. There are several features of this part of their experience which may be contemplated with advantage.

You will observe that they left the path of duty because they were dissatisfied with it. They did not always find that path equally pleasant. While it lay along the bank of the River of Life, they were much pleased with it; but when it parted from the river, their pleasure ceased. The road was now rough, their feet were tender, and their souls were much discouraged because of the way. The service of God is not

always equally satisfactory to those engaged in it. It involves much that is delightful to them, but it involves also much that is difficult and distasteful. It is not for us to inquire, however, what is easiest, or most pleasant, or most profitable in a worldly sense, but only what is right. Having ascertained the right course, it behoves us to walk in it. There was no perplexity on the part of the two pilgrims. They knew themselves to be in the right way, but were dissatisfied with it. In this state of mind they were prepared to enter into temptation, and it was not long before a temptation presented itself. They saw this Stile; and, looking over it, discovered a path which seemed parallel with their proper course, and far more pleasant. They resolved to leave the rough right road, and in another moment had crossed the Stile. What pilgrim has not sometimes been as dissatisfied as they were with the path of duty? None of us find it always easy to

say from the heart, "The will of the Lord be done!" Yet we are not without a brilliant example of entire submission to the Divine will when such submission involves unspeakable suffering and sternest self-denial. The path in which the Prince of pilgrims had to walk, led directly to the cross; but when it loomed before Him in all its horror, He addressed His Father, in language expressive of the utmost loyalty, saying, "Not my will, but thine, be done!" Having left us an example that we should follow in His steps, He is ready to communicate to us the Spirit that was in Himself; and if we but remember this when we feel dissatisfied with the way which God has marked out for us, we might soon be enabled to say as we are taught, "Thy will be done."

In leaving the proper path for the one which ran through By-path Meadow, one pilgrim was influenced by the other. It was Christian who proposed that they should cross the Stile.

Hopeful had some scruple about doing so, but his deference for his elder and more experienced companion was such that he yielded to his wish. He was not, however, without blame on this account. He ought to have reasoned with his companion on the subject. He ought to have persisted in the right way himself, whether Christian deviated from it or not. Neither tempt your companions to transgress, nor be tempted by them. There is a peculiar power in the temptation which one Christian presents to another. The saint is a more successful tempter than the sinner. Men are apt to say, "This is the course I should like to adopt, and it can't be an improper one, for such an one recommends it." Don't be too hasty in coming to conclusions of this kind, however. It is in general right for us to do as other Christians have done before us and are doing now. But we must not imitate them in everything. We are to follow them only while

they follow Christ. We are to follow them in the way of holiness, but not out of it.

The pilgrims found the way of transgression pleasant at first, but painful afterwards. They found By-path Meadow very easy for their feet, and were assured by another traveller that they were in the right way. But the night came on. They lost sight of that traveller, and presently heard him fall into a deep pit, wherein he was dashed to pieces. Moreover, the rain fell, the thunder pealed, the lightning flashed, and the flood rose. They were filled with regret and fear. That this is true to life is not for a moment doubtful. Christians, like others, are often induced to adopt a wrong course by the pleasure which attends wrong-doing. But that pleasure is transitory and gives place to wretchedness. The poetic caution contained in the Book of Proverbs is of wider application than appears to those who only regard its letter: "Look not thou upon the wine when

it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." The riotous living of the prodigal is followed by the want which makes him willing to share the food of swine. By-path Meadow is a pleasant place enough while the day lasts; but when the night comes on, those who wander in it are exposed to grievous peril, and rendered miserable by the reflection that their own folly has brought them there.

The pilgrims found it harder to return to the right path than to leave it. Their condition got worse and worse as the night wore on. They made an effort to regain the road whence they had wandered, and were not without encouragement to persevere in it. "They heard the voice of one, saying, 'Set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which, thou wentest, turn again.'" But the effort failed. They were nearly drowned as

many as nine or ten times. Reluctantly they relinquished the hope of getting back; and resigning themselves to slumber, fell into the hands of Giant Despair, and were carried to Doubting Castle, whence they did not escape until they had suffered fearfully in its dismal dungeons. There are some who will need no explanation of this. Your own experience has taught you what it means. You remember that wrong-doing was easy, but reparation hard; that sin was easy, but repentance difficult; that error was easy, but restoration to the right road the reverse. Transgression was committed in a moment, but its consequences afflicted you for years, and afflict you still. It were well if others would learn from your experience the truth of those inspired words which assure us that, notwithstanding some hardships which are incident to the path of duty, "wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." But men seldom do learn

all that the experience of their fellow men is adapted to teach. It is their personal experience which writes the truth upon their hearts. Hence By-path Meadow still attracts those pilgrims who are offended with the proper path, and there be those among us, probably, who will yet cross the Stile which leads to it. When they have done so, and have found the fruits of their folly, let them remember that they were warned. I warn you now. Be warned, ye wise in heart. Beware of By-path Meadow. Be content to walk still in the way of God's commandments, and turn neither to the right hand nor to the left.

IV.

The only other error of which we need think at present is that which Christian and Hopeful committed when they allowed themselves to be misled by the Flatterer. Having come to a place where they found it difficult to decide

which of two roads that lay before them was their proper path, they stood still to consider the matter. Before they had come to any conclusion they were accosted by a black man clad in a white robe. He assured them that he was on his way to the Celestial City, and invited them to follow him. They at once placed themselves under his guidance, and he led them along one of the roads just mentioned ; a road which by degrees so turned and turned that their faces were presently turned away from the city they sought. Nor was this all ; for he led them into a net, which so entangled them that they knew not what to do, and at that moment the white robe of their betrayer fell from his shoulders.

This betrayer was one of those false teachers, concerning whom the apostle says, "Such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ." The words of another inspired writer are emphati-

cally true of every such person, "The man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet." The white Robe, or affected purity of such a man, and the confidence with which he undertakes to lead those who desire to walk in the right way but are in some perplexity respecting it, are sufficient to impose on many pilgrims. They find him a pleasant guide. His flattering speech is grateful to their self-esteem. The very circumstance that ought to put them on their guard thus lulls them into a false security. It is worthy of remark that both true doctrine and false doctrine have a tendency to make those who embrace them feel secure. False doctrine can only produce a false security, but how shall we know that it is false? There is one test which may be applied with confidence. The sense of security produced by the truth is associated with humility, whereas that which is produced by false doctrine is associated with self-complacency and

spiritual pride. When people say that it is of little consequence what a man believes so that he lives a holy life, they seem to be not aware that his creed must influence his conduct for good or evil. It is true, indeed, that one man is better, and another worse, than the creed he professes ; but it is also true that he who has heartily embraced the truth will live a holy life, whereas the man who embraces one kind of false doctrine will be addicted to gross vices, and he who has embraced another will be inflated with spiritual pride. Thus it was with the pilgrims when the Flatterer presented himself to them. They heard what he had to say, accepted his guidance, and were grievously misled by that false friend.

They would not have been deceived in this way, however, but for their own negligence. They had been recently warned by the Shepherds who occupied the Delectable Mountains to beware of this very man. They had also

received from those Shepherds a Note of the Way. But they neglected the warning and the written instructions thus communicated; so that, when they were deceived by the Flatterer, they had themselves to blame. Those Christians who take heed to the Word of God as contained in the Bible, and as preached by those who expound the sacred volume, will not be easily misled by the false, but flattering, doctrines which challenge their attention from time to time. Beware, then, of the Flatterer. You will sometimes find him in the pulpit, and sometimes elsewhere. He will sometimes appear as a professed and recognised minister of religion, and sometimes as a mere layman. But he will always profess to be on his way to the Celestial City, and ready to guide you thither. But beneath the white robe of such professions the man himself is black. The true minister of Christ is he who proclaims the humbling doctrines of the Cross. No flattering

sentence escapes his lips ; and he who heeds the truth which he teaches will be able to say with the psalmist, "By the word of thy lips I have kept me from paths of the destroyer."

The deviation of the pilgrims from their proper course was not the less dangerous for being gradual. They turned and turned by degrees until their backs were turned to the Celestial City, and before they were aware that such was the case, their feet were entangled in the flatterer's net. It is often thus. The Christian cannot, perhaps, be persuaded to adopt a palpably evil course all at once, but there is danger that he may be induced to adopt it by degrees. The first wrong step, therefore, should be carefully avoided. It will be easier to refrain from the first than the second, and from the second than from subsequent steps in the same direction. The wrong road is a downward one, and those who travel a downward road are apt

to do so with accelerating velocity. On no account, then, allow yourselves to be persuaded to take one step in any direction except that which is indicated by the Word of God.

THE PILGRIMS AND THEIR ENEMIES.



VI.

THE PILGRIMS AND THEIR ENEMIES.

"Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies."—*Psa.* cxliiii. 9.

THIS is a prayer which every pilgrim to the Celestial City has frequent occasion to employ. It implies that the petitioner has enemies, and that he is unable to escape from them without Divine aid. Such is, indeed, the case, and Bunyan has illustrated the truth on this subject with characteristic power. There are principally four foes to be encountered by God's people during their pilgrimage, viz., Society, Satan, Sin, and Self.

I.

SOCIETY is a formidable enemy of those who go on pilgrimage. In other words, the World

is the deadly antagonist of the Church. No one who is acquainted with the Scriptures can doubt that such is their teaching. "Perhaps not," says one; "but do they teach the reverse? They assuredly teach that the World is the foe of the Church, but do they teach that the Church is the enemy of the World? Do they not rather teach that the Church is the benefactor of the World?" I reply that Christians are required by the Word of God to do all the good they can to their fellow men, and even to love their enemies. Nevertheless they are to make war on the evil maxims, fashions, laws and principles which prevail in worldly society. They are bound to do all they can to restrain the operation of these things. The nature of the warfare they wage with the World is such that they may love their enemies and oppose them at the same time. This will be clear to those who apprehend the meaning of certain inspired words which relate to this subject:

“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” But whether the Church is or is not the enemy of the World, the World is indisputably the enemy of the Church. Society assumes three different hostile attitudes in relation to the people of God. It assumes the attitude of persecution in order to injure their bodies, that of sophistry in order to pervert their minds, and that of seduction in order to corrupt their hearts.

Society has inflicted grievous bodily injury upon many of God's people. At the end of the Valley of the Shadow of Death Christian found the blood and bones and ashes of many slaughtered pilgrims; and not far off was a cave in which two giants had long dwelt, named respectively Pope and Pagan. Christian, however, went by without receiving any injury; Pagan being then dead, and Pope too aged and infirm to do more than sit at the mouth of the cave and grin and bite his nails at the pil-

grims who passed by. The old giant vented his spleen by calling after Christian, "You will never mend till more of you be burned!" Now, when we read that Pagan is dead and Pope decrepid, we must understand this as true only as far as our own country was concerned at the time the Allegory was composed. In other countries both Paganism and Popery were vigorous enough, and at this moment they challenge the attention of those who fight the good fight of faith. Another personification of that persecuting power which has so often been brought to bear on the people of God was a giant we read of in the second part of the "Pilgrims' Progress." This was Giant Grim, or Bloody-man, who was addicted to the slaughter of pilgrims, and is, perhaps, to be regarded as the type of those so-called Protestant rulers who have persecuted to the death the saints of the Most High. This grim giant, however, was himself at length overcome in the conflict he

provoked, and his death may be accepted as a hint that all religious persecution is a failure, the cause of those who endure it being destined to prevail in the long run. As Mackay says :—

“ The man is thought a knave, or fool, or bigot plotting crime,
Who, for the advancement of his kind, is wiser than his time.
For him the hemlock shall distil, for him the axe be bared,
For him the gibbet shall be built, for him the stake prepared.
Him shall the scorn and wrath of man pursue with deadly aim,
And malice, envy, spite, and lies shall desecrate his name ;
But truth shall conquer at the last, for round and round we run,
And ever the right comes uppermost, and ever is justice done.”

Society endeavours to pervert the minds of God's people. In the place where Christian had seen the cave of Pope and Pagan the pilgrims described in the second part of the Allegory saw another giant named Maul, who used to spoil young pilgrims with sophistry. The lesson thus taught is that specious arguments are now employed instead of force to advance the cause of falsehood, and that young people are chiefly endangered thereby. The creed which some false teachers who are held in honour by the

World would have the youth of this country adopt is hardly to be distinguished from that of the better sort of Pagans; whereas others would have them adopt a creed which is either that of actual Papists or very like it. There are many young persons who are misled by the Rationalists on the one hand and by the Ritualists on the other. Among these you may hear much complacent talk about reason and science; among those you may hear much confident conversation about the Church and the sacraments. The sophistries employed by the teachers of either class are not easily met by young and inexperienced persons. Giant Maul is a mighty champion, and his club an effective weapon. But the giant is not invincible. He may be slain. Indeed, he was slain, according to the Allegory. These giants, however, experience a repeated resurrection, and the pilgrims of every age are liable to their assaults. Giant Slay-good, who threatened to destroy Mr. Feeble-

mind, belonged to the same class as Giant Maul. But neither Maul nor Slay-good could resist the sword of the Spirit when wielded by skilful and determined hands. The various forms of scepticism and superstition are more or less powerful, but the truth is more powerful still.

Society seeks to corrupt the hearts of God's people. It offers them amusement and pleasure of a kind that can only result in mischief to those who bite at the bait. The homely account which Bunyan gives of Madam Wanton is true to the life. Her home was in the City of Destruction. Her friends were Mrs. Light-mind, Mrs. Love-the-flesh, Mrs. Filth, and Mr. Lechery, who met at her house, where they had music and dancing and what else was meet to fill up the time with pleasure. Her object was to seduce pilgrims. She made an attempt on the patriarch Joseph. She made another on the martyr

Faithful. But though she had a flattering tongue, and dealt largely in promises, they were not numbered with her victims. They understood that the abhorred of the Lord shall fall into her ditch, and that "her steps take hold on hell." Madam Bubble was another personification of the same seductive worldly influence. Pastors may well warn their people against worldly society and amusements; and when you have accused them of puritanical austerity for their pains, you have done nothing to diminish the force of their language on the subject. If you appeal to my intelligence and challenge me to show that such and such things are essentially mischievous, I shall appeal to your consciences, and challenge you to deny that you have found them so. I by no means assert that there is neither a time nor a place for festivity, for music and song, and for various pleasurable occupations. But I do assert that whenever

and wherever the spirit of the world is felt to prevail in connection with such things Christians should refrain from them. When society assumes its most amiable, attractive, and fascinating aspect, it may be most incumbent on the Christian to resist its influence, knowing, as he does, that woe must sooner or later overtake those who are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

II.

SATAN is another enemy of those who go on pilgrimage. This name, which means "adversary," is applied by way of eminence in the Scriptures to that mighty and malignant spirit who is otherwise spoken of as the god and prince of this world. This formidable foe is none the less to be dreaded because he is unseen, or because his influence is not recognised, or because his personality is denied, or because he is associated in certain departments of literature with

grotesque and ludicrous ideas. Those who believe the Scriptures, and duly consider what they say respecting him, will not despise his enmity. They will not treat the story of the serpent's success in Paradise, or that of the distress inflicted by Satan on the patriarch Job, or that of the disastrous census taken by David at his instance, or that of the demoniacs mentioned in the New Testament, as so many idle tales. They will not deem the sobriety and the vigilance to which they are exhorted relative to this foe unnecessary. They will expect to perish unless they resist him. The account given of him in the "Pilgrim's Progress" is a very instructive one.


1. Satan is represented in the Allegory as seeking to prevent the sinner from gaining access to the Saviour. When Christian had knocked once or twice at the Wicket Gate it was opened by one named Good-will, who

not only assured him of welcome, but pulled him in as he was about to step in of his own accord. Christian having asked the meaning of this, was told that there was a castle at a little distance from that spot, from which Beelzebub and those associated with him were wont to shoot at those who applied for admission at the Wicket Gate. So also when Christiana and her companions had knocked thereat for some time, the only result apparent to them was the rousing of a great dog, which barked so furiously that they were afraid to persevere with their knocking. At length, however, they resumed it, knocking louder than before, and presently the voice of the Gate-Keeper was heard. At that voice the dog ceased to bark, and the pilgrims were presently admitted. One of them having asked the Keeper why he kept so cruel a dog at his gate, he replied that the dog did not belong

to him, but to the castle they might see at some distance from it. Now all this corresponds with the actual experience of those who apply to the Saviour for the grace they need. Dr. Watts has taught us to sing that—

"Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees."

We need not wonder that such is the case, nor need we wonder that the Prince of Darkness seeks to prevent his subjects from transferring their allegiance to the Prince of Light. By the arrows which his archers shot, and by the barking of his dog when various persons approached the Wicket Gate, we may understand any of the means he employs to prevent poor sinners from seeking the Saviour's help. One person is tempted to doubt whether Christ will receive him, and another to postpone his application to Him to a more convenient season. To one he presents the prospect of worldly



prosperity as the reward of a life spent in his service, and to another that of worldly adversity as the consequence of a Christian career. He suggests to one that he is too soon, and to another that he is too late, in respect of his effort to obtain Divine mercy. But those who refuse to heed him, and persevere with their knocking at the Wicket Gate, will soon be welcomed by the Saviour to all the blessings of His love.


2. Satan is represented in the Allegory as seeking to prevent the Christian from joining the visible Church. Just before the pilgrims reached the House Beautiful they had to pass two lions. These lions were chained, but their chains were not always apparent, whereas their roaring was very terrible indeed, so that those who approached were affrighted in many instances. Mistrust and Timorous were so daunted that they turned back. Christian seemed inclined to follow their example, but

the porter called to him, and encouraged him to keep right on. He pursued his way accordingly, but it was with fear and trembling. The account of these lions reminds us that the devil is likened by the Word of God to a roaring lion, and there is no doubt that we must regard them as emblems of that awful enemy. Their position relative to the House Beautiful illustrates the manner in which he seeks to prevent Christians from entering the Church. He renders them fearful in relation to this matter. Some of them are afraid to seek admission because they fancy that they have no right to do so. They are so conscious of their own imperfections that it seems to them they are unworthy of a place among the people of God. But surely those who have applied to the Master for grace need not hesitate to apply to the disciples for fellowship. Those who compose the Church are themselves imperfect, one object

of Church fellowship being the improvement of those who are parties to it. It has sometimes been the case that a Christian has been afraid to apply for admission to the Church lest he should not be made welcome to its privileges by those who already enjoy them. But all true members of the true Church will rejoice to receive every disciple of their Lord to a share in those privileges. Were it otherwise, it would still be the Christian's duty to seek union with them, and they would reject him at their peril. Some believers are afraid to join the Church lest they should afterwards relapse into some sinful practice, and thus dishonour the cause of Christ. This, of course, is possible, but is not a reason why those who are now serving the Lord should refrain from associating with their fellow Christians. The Saviour will be alive to-morrow, and next year, and evermore. His grace will never be exhausted; and it behoves His people to

take their proper place as such among those who profess to love Him, seeking His aid from day to day in their efforts to walk in a manner worthy of their high vocation. The point to be observed is that when Christ's people are afraid from any cause to apply for admission to His Church, their fear is attributable to Satan. He knows that it will be for their own advantage, for the welfare of the Church at large, and for the glory of their Divine Lord, if they obtain what they desire. He will therefore do His worst to baffle them in regard to this matter.

3. Satan is represented in the Allegory as seeking to prevent pilgrims from making progress in the way of life. Thus Apollyon presented himself to Christian in the Valley of Humiliation, and sought to induce him to abandon the pilgrimage he had undertaken. He did not assail his intended victim until he found him proof against his arguments



and promises. Then, indeed, he sought to destroy him, and would have succeeded but for the grace of God. Apollyon, *i. e.*, the Destroyer, has dealt thus with myriads of human beings. It is by him and his associates, according to Bunyan, that Vanity Fair has been instituted; and those who carry on this fair are represented as trying to detain the pilgrims who pass through it by exhibiting its attractions, and, on the failure of this plan, by more violent means. Satan is so far successful in his attempts to hinder God's people in the way of life that their progress is often slower than it should be. We need not wonder at this, for he is mightier than they. But there is One mightier than he. To Christians it is said by a faithful witness, "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." Hence, notwithstanding the interruptions occasioned by the devil, they persevere in their quest after the crown of life.

4. Finally, Satan is represented in the Allegory as seeking to annoy those whom he cannot destroy. His influence was felt by the pilgrims in the Valley of the Shadow of Death in a very distressing manner. The Mouth of Hell was in that valley, and from the bottomless pit, in which he is the recognised ruler, issued loathsome smells and sounds and shapes. Serpents hissed, lions roared, fiends hovered about, groans and lamentations were heard, so that this was the most dismal part of the pilgrimage. Moreover, the pilgrims had to take heed to the deep ditch on one side of the way, the dangerous quag on the other, and the many snares which were set in their neighbourhood, the darkness rendering these things the more perilous. Poor Christian was especially afflicted by the words of blasphemy which one of the fiends whispered in his ear, for they seemed to be spoken by himself. All these things powerfully indicate the distress

which Satan occasions the disciples of Christ to experience. Bunyan had been thus distressed in his time ; and though all Christians do not suffer thus in the same degree, they would do so if Satan had his way.

III.

SIN is another enemy of those who go on pilgrimage. It has power to injure them in various ways. There is especially one way in which it does so. The Apostle Paul tells us that "the strength of sin is the law." Sin provokes the Divine law against the sinner, and this renders it a very formidable enemy indeed. Those who have set out from the City of Destruction, if saints in one sense, are still sinners in another. They are still prone to transgress the law of God, and often do so. They do not dream of denying that such is the case. Their language on the subject is, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive

ourselves, and the truth is not in us." The pilgrim Christian sinned by his attempt to obtain deliverance in a way that God had not ordained, and was threatened with destruction at Mount Sinai in consequence. His friend Faithful was also threatened with destruction by the Divine law as the result of wrong-doing on his part, and it is to his experience in this particular that your attention is now especially invited. As he and Christian pursued their way together he acknowledged to that companion that he had felt a strong inclination to sin while climbing the Hill Difficulty. Looking back when half-way up, he found that he was pursued. This is very like life. The Christian finds it hard work to resist sin. It is climbing the Hill Difficulty to do so. But he does resist it, and then, alas! reflects that it would have been more pleasant to have yielded. He looks back while yet but half-way up the hill he has to climb. This back-

ward look, however, is apt to result in an unpleasant discovery. The Avenger appears. Faithful's pursuer, swift as the wind, soon overtook him, knocked him down, and laid him for dead. He was not, however, slain; and having presently revived somewhat, he ventured to ask an explanation of the attack thus made on him. He was told that it resulted from his recent inclination to sin, and then knocked down again. Again the poor pilgrim revived, and this time entreated the mercy of his assailant. "I know not how to show mercy," was the stern reply of that personage, who then knocked him down once more, and would have made an end of him, but that One came by, whose hands and side had been pierced, and who bade the Avenger forbear. He from whose hands Faithful was thus delivered was Moses, *i.e.*, the Divine law. This was not the first time Faithful had seen him. While he was still resident in the City

of Destruction Moses accosted him, and assured him that if he stayed there he would burn his house over his head. Men have nothing to fear from God's law as men. Innocent human beings, were such persons in existence, would have no cause to dread it. But men have reason to dread the law as sinners. It is sin which excites its hostility against the sinner. Hence sin is to be regarded as a very deadly foe, and should be resisted as such. If any of you say that you have resisted this enemy for many years, but have not triumphed yet, it may be replied that "ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Others have had to do even that, and it was worth their while. Be thankful if you are not beset as they were. Ponder the story of their warfare. Array yourselves in armour like that which covered them in the day of battle. Emulate their prowess in the time of peril. Cherish those ideas and senti-

ments which made them so valiant in the good cause. Shout the war-cry which rent the air when they did battle with the enemy which you have now to fight. Do anything but lay down your arms. Quit you like men in this warfare, and fight as long as necessary with the sin which will otherwise overcome, enslave, and utterly destroy you.

IV.

SELF is the last enemy of the pilgrims to be noticed by us at present. Self has various names in the Allegory, and these names are so many sermons to those who duly heed them. Bunyan had learned much respecting the plague of his own heart. His personal experience had abundantly confirmed the testimony of Holy Writ which assures us that "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," and also that "he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." We find

him, therefore, representing Self, or, as we are wont to say in Scripture phrase, the Flesh, as one of the enemies with which pilgrims must contend.

1. At the foot of the Hill Difficulty Faithful met with an aged man who told him that his name was Adam the First. This person endeavoured to persuade him to enter his service and share his home. That home was in the town of Deceit, and was supplied with all the dainties in the world. The service required was delightful in itself, and would be liberally rewarded, for Faithful should be his heir, and, if he would, become his son-in-law. His three daughters were named respectively the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life. The pilgrim was somewhat disposed to accept the offer thus made to him; but, looking in his forehead as he talked with him, he saw there written a passage from the Word of God, "Put off the old man with his

deeds." This saved him. It flashed into his mind that this First Adam was a deceiver and destroyer, and he told him that he would not go near the door of his house. Then the old man reviled and threatened the pilgrim, taking hold of his flesh with such a deadly twitch as to make Faithful cry out, "O wretched man!" thinking his assailant had pulled a part of himself after him. We have all had more or less experience of the behaviour of this old man. Our own depraved nature, derived from the First Adam, is always our spiritual foe. The Flesh wars against the Spirit. Its enmity is all the more to be dreaded on account of the disguise it is apt to assume. It seeks to decoy us by fair promises and attractive prospects from the way of life. Only when we see through the disguise and discern the deceit does this subtle foe deal roughly with us. But its roughness is better than its smoothness. We are more likely to escape from its violence

than from its deceitful gentleness, and shall escape therefrom if we play the man.

2. In the Valley of Humiliation Faithful met with Discontent, who wanted him to turn back, on the ground that the valley was altogether without honour, and that to go through it would displease his friends. Among these friends were Pride, Arrogancy, Self-conceit, Worldly-glory, and others who were related to the pilgrim according to the flesh. But he had disowned them and they him, and he had learned that "before honour is humility, and a haughty spirit before a fall." The discontent which arises because of the humiliation involved in the service of Christ must be resisted by all who desire to walk in the right way. Our names may be mentioned with a sneer; our doctrines and companions may be regarded with contempt, and our consciences may compel us to decline certain worldly distinctions of more or less importance, but what of that?

We know who said that "that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." What the world regards as dishonourable is sometimes regarded as exactly the reverse by the Judge of all, and it is always true that "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Discontent may sometimes arise from other causes. Poverty may occasion it, and often does. But the Christian ought not to be discontented on this account. His poverty is temporary; an inheritance of unspeakable value awaits him; and even now, though destitute of gold and silver and landed possessions, he may be rich in faith. Let worldlings laugh as loudly as they please at the mention of such things: they bring contentment to those who realise them. Paul was not the only human being who has been able to say with perfect truth, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, to be content."

3. In the same valley Faithful met with

Shame, whose name should have been anything rather than that. He was a bold-faced fellow who was not easily to be shaken off. He had the impudence to say that concern for religion is a pitiful, low, and sneaking thing ; that it is unmanly to have a tender conscience, together with some other things of the same nature, which brought the blood up into the pilgrims' face. No Christian will deny that he is apt to be influenced by a false shame which he finds it very difficult to shake off. Have not some of you been ashamed to profess your faith in Christ ? and are not those who have made this profession ashamed to act accordingly ? Away with such a feeling ! No Christian has any reason to be ashamed of Christ or of His service. The only thing which should make us ashamed is that we do not serve Him better.

" Ashamed of Jesus ! that dear Friend,
On whom my hopes of heaven depend ;
No ! when I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere His Name."

The words of the Lord Jesus Himself may be remembered with advantage as often as we are tempted to be ashamed of Him: "Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." The language which becomes every Christian is that of the apostle who said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

4. But Self sometimes confronted the pilgrims under a name more terrible than any yet mentioned. The old Adam is bad enough, so are Discontent and Shame, but Despair is worse than either. Yet Christian, and even

Hopeful, fell into the hands of Giant Despair. That grim foe treated them cruelly. He imprisoned them, beat them repeatedly, showed them the bones of his former victims, and advised them to seek release from himself by suicide. They were delivered from this enemy, as Bunyan himself was, and as David was long before. But his captives have not always thus escaped. Even angels have been ruined by this giant, so that it seems a small thing to say that many human beings have been ruined by his agency. I remember one who took the advice this giant is so apt to give. He was a professor of religion, the superintendent of a Sunday-school, and reputed most devout. But he fell into the hands of Giant Despair, was imprisoned in Doubting Castle, and there inflicted on himself a mortal wound. He told those who crowded round his dying couch that his suicide was occasioned by his despair of finding the Divine mercy. I judge him not.


It may be that his despair resulted from some cerebral disease rather than from the anguish of a lacerated conscience. But his case, and every similar case, is replete with warning to those who go on pilgrimage, as well as others. The path of safety is one of SELF-DENIAL, and to that, therefore, I exhort you in the name of God !

THE PILGRIMS AND THEIR PRINCE.

VII.

THE PILGRIMS AND THEIR PRINCE.

"Jesus, the author and finisher of [our] faith."—*Heb.* xii. 2.

EAVING out the interpolated personal pronoun, and substituting two other words for "author and finisher," which quite as truly represent the original, we find the Redeemer here described as "Jesus, the Prince and Perfecter of faith." He is repeatedly spoken of as a prince in the Scriptures. In one passage He is termed the Prince of Peace ; in another the Prince of Life ; and in another the Prince of the kings of the earth. The passage before us implies that He is the Prince of those who are described in the context as "strangers and pilgrims on the earth." They

were prompted to seek the better country to which they aspired by their religious faith. That faith rendered them remarkable, but it was not perfected in them. It was only perfected in their Prince. We have therefore not only the advantage of their example : we have also the example of their Leader, and are exhorted to address ourselves to the pilgrimage they accomplished, "looking unto Jesus, the Prince and Perfecter of faith." This Prince is often mentioned in Bunyan's book, in which He is represented as the Source of spiritual blessing to the pilgrims, the Object of their best affections, and the Theme of the conversation in which they most delighted.

I.

CHRIST IS THE SOURCE OF THOSE SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS WHICH HIS PEOPLE ENJOY. The pilgrims had a large and varied experience of their Prince's grace ; and their experience may

be usefully compared, or contrasted, with our own.

It was *by Him that they were admitted to the Way of Life* at the outset. When they sought admission at the Wicket Gate it was opened by the Gate-Keeper, by whom, as by the Gate itself, we must understand that Christ is represented. They were not really pilgrims at all till that Gate had been opened to them, nor could they have entertained any well-founded hope of a place in the Celestial City, had it remained shut against them. Their admission therefore at that Gate was a blessing of unspeakable value; and the question is whether it is one which you also have obtained. To some of you the Wicket Gate has doubtless been opened, and you are now walking in the right way; but this is not the case with all, and the preacher's business is to encourage those who have not yet done so to apply for this blessing. Why should you be diffident

in relation to this matter? Why should you remain in the City of Destruction, or fall into the Slough of Despond, or wander away to Mount Sinai? Christ is able to admit you to the way of life, and His power to do this is the more worthy of regard because it is peculiar to Himself. No one else can set the sinner in the path of safety. The sinner himself cannot do this, nor can his fellow-men, nor can the angels of heaven. "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved;" whereas Christ "is able to save unto the uttermost them which come unto God by him." The Saviour is not less willing than able to set you in the way of life. You find ample assurance of this in the Word of God. You read therein of the willingness He displayed to respond graciously to those who sought His help. Which of them did He send empty away? Not one; and "Jesus Christ

is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." The Saviour is ready to open the Gate of Grace to you. He waiteth to be gracious. Whenever you are ready for Him, you will find Him ready for you. He is far more ready to bless than sinners are to seek His blessing. The crucified malefactor found Him ready to respond to his application for that mercy he so sorely needed. His prayer was, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" and it was more than answered with the utmost promptitude, for Christ replied, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise." The Saviour has promised, moreover, to do for you what He has done for others. They went to Him and were welcomed, and He has pledged His Word that whosoever will may seek His grace with the same success. His own words on the subject are, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." His promise has been

often tested with the most satisfactory result. In no instance has it been falsified. It is impossible that He should fail to keep His word. He is Himself the Word of God, the Faithful Witness, and claims to be the Truth. His Deity precludes the idea of any failure on His part to verify His promises; for God "is not a man, that he should lie; nor the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" By your guilt and danger, then, O sinner, and also by your knowledge that Christ is able and willing and ready and pledged to save all who apply to Him, be entreated to seek His grace without another moment's delay.

The pilgrims obtained *peace* from their Prince. The experience of Christian in this respect is beautifully described. Not only did the burden which had oppressed him so grievously roll from his shoulders in presence

of the cross, and tumble into the mouth of the sepulchre: three Shining Ones saluted him then and there, saying, "Peace be to thee." These radiant personages undoubtedly denote those who constitute the Holy Trinity. One of them was, therefore, the Prince of Pilgrims, and He was associated with His Father and His Spirit in the communication of peace to the man who had till then been burdened with a troubled conscience. But how was peace communicated to him? In the only effectual manner: viz., by the assurance of pardon and justification. He experienced "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," when the first of these Shining Ones said to him, "Thy sins be forgiven thee;" "the love of God," when the second stripped him of his rags and clothed him with change of raiment; "and the communion of the Holy Ghost," when the third set a mark in his forehead, and gave him a roll with a seal on it, which he was to look at while he pursued his

journey, and to show when he reached his journey's end. He obtained the blessing of forgiveness from the first, and of justification from the second, while from the third he obtained a certificate that the two former blessings had been thus bestowed. The man who is furnished with evidence of his own pardon and justification by the Holy Spirit may well be at peace; and he derives this peace from the Lord Jesus Christ, who shed His blood to purchase it for him. It may appear superfluous that a man should be assured of both pardon and justification. It may even appear to be a contradiction in terms to say that he is assured of both. That subject whose sovereign has pardoned his offences has nothing to fear from the law. That accused person who has been pronounced Not Guilty in a court of justice has nothing to fear from the law. The man who accepts a pardon thereby acknowledges that he cannot be justi-

fied, while the man who is justified by the verdict, "Not Guilty," is in no need of a pardon. Nevertheless the pilgrim needs both pardon and justification, and is glad to be assured of these blessings. The explanation is that he sustains a double character in the sight of God. As an individual he is a sinner, and needs pardon; but as a member of Christ he is sinless, and is therefore justified.

The pilgrims were supplied with *manifold and suitable provision* for their refreshment by their Prince. There were harbours erected here and there by His direction, in which they might rest when weary. There were fruits and cordials for those who needed such viands. The Water of Life bubbled up for them at the foot of the Hill Difficulty, and was found in great abundance elsewhere, that they might quench their thirst. When Christian had beaten off Apollyon, there came to him a Hand with some leaves of the Tree of Life, which the

warrior-pilgrim applied to his wounds, and by which those wounds were immediately healed. Moreover, the pilgrims were furnished with appropriate guidance and companionship. In fine, their experience abundantly verified those precious words of Holy Writ, "The Lord God is a sun and shield ; the Lord will give grace and glory ; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." "My grace is sufficient for thee." Is not the experience of all Christians of the same kind? The means of grace which the Lord Jesus Christ has ordained are found to be unspeakably precious by His people everywhere and evermore. They are, indeed, indispensable to them. Whether they are brought to us or we resort to them, they are equally adapted to fit us for the journey to which we are called, the work we have to do, the warfare we have to wage, the difficulties we have to encounter, and the troubles we have to endure. Our ordinary

necessities are met by the ordinary means of grace. The word, the day, the house, the ministers, and the Church of the Lord are amply sufficient for them. Our extraordinary necessities are met by extraordinary means of grace. The Divine Providence assumes such aspects as are best adapted to our case. We are enriched or impoverished, strengthened or weakened, daunted or encouraged, employed in one way or another, in order that our spiritual welfare may be duly promoted. It becomes us to recognise and acknowledge the goodness of our Lord in this respect. It becomes us also to avail ourselves of the means of grace which He provides as fully as possible. In proportion as we despise or neglect them shall we be hindered in the way of life. In proportion as we gratefully use them we shall enjoy personal spiritual prosperity, set a beneficial example to our fellow-men, and render honour to our Divine and gracious Prince.

The pilgrims were delivered by their Prince from the trouble which resulted from their own errors. Thus, e.g., when they had allowed themselves to be misled by the Flatterer, and had consequently got entangled in a net from which they were unable to escape by their own efforts, they espied a Shining One coming toward them. This was that Shining One who had formerly pronounced the pardon of Christian. He rent the net in which they were confined, and led them into that road whence they had wandered. It is instructive to observe, however, that this deliverance was attended with some discomfort to Christian and Hopeful. They were subjected by their Deliverer to a rigid examination, of such a kind as to make them adequately sensible of their fault. Moreover, He chastised them with a whip of small cords which He carried in His hand before He allowed them to proceed. But He so tempered this severity with kindness that their gratitude was

not at all diminished by it. His strokes were accompanied by the words, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent." There are two lessons thus taught. One is that it is impossible for God's people to transgress with impunity. It is true that they shall never perish in the destruction which shall overwhelm His stubborn enemies, but it is equally true that their sin will find them out. It was so with Moses, with David, with Hezekiah, and with many others who departed from the way of holiness in former times, and it will be so with all who do the same thing. The other lesson is that the very punishment of their transgressions is a proof of the Saviour's affection for His people. The chastisement which Christian and Hopeful experienced at the hands of their Deliverer was remembered by them with advantage afterwards. Atheist sought to turn them from the proper path, as the Flatterer had before him,

but could not succeed because they still smarted from the whip of small cords. The deliverance they experienced was thus a double one. Their Prince not only delivered them from the net in which they were entangled through their own folly, but prevented them from being again misled by the next tempter who accosted them. The Christian who has been chastised by his Prince has good reason, therefore, to say with the psalmist, "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me;" even though the rod may not be an instrument which we are apt to associate with comfort.

The pilgrims obtained the best of blessings for their children from their Prince. When Christiana commenced her pilgrimage she was accompanied by her four children: before she had completed it they ceased to be children, and had children of their own. What was to be done with these little ones? The children of Christians are not necessarily Christians or

Christless themselves. They may or may not be pilgrims like their parents. It would seem that the pilgrims in the Allegory were unable to take their little ones with them towards the Celestial City, and they resolved, therefore, to entrust them to the care of One who tended the lambs on the banks of the River of Life. This One was that Good Shepherd of whom it is said in Holy Writ that "he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." The pilgrims might well be content to commit their children to the care of that gentle Saviour, who was much displeased with those who sought to prevent parents from bringing their children to receive His blessing in the days of His flesh; saying, for the encouragement of all who are solicitous for the spiritual welfare of their offspring, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." There are some of you who grieve because your children

are not walking in the right way. You want them to become your fellow-pilgrims to the Paradise of God, but they display no desire to walk with you in that direction. It is worth your while to inquire, therefore, whether you have done all in your power to lead them to Christ. What have you taught them concerning Him? How have you displayed in their presence your devotion to Him? With what degree of frequency and fervour and faith have you entreated His grace on their behalf? Neither suitable instruction, example, nor supplication on your part is enough of itself. They are all required; and the question is, How far have you met this requirement? Those who meet it faithfully have the double consolation of knowing that they are not responsible for their children's errors, and that they may expect them to become children of God by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. That grace is as available and as necessary for children as for their

elders, and the pity is that any Christian parents should fail to seek it on behalf of their offspring with the requisite diligence and in the proper manner. The Prince of pilgrims is most willing to take charge of the little ones entrusted to His care.

II.

CHRIST IS THE OBJECT OF HIS PEOPLE'S BEST AFFECTIONS. The feelings with which they regard Him are amply set forth in the Allegory. The confidence and hope, the gratitude, pleasure, and loyalty, which the pilgrims cherished in relation to their Prince, are suggested in various ways throughout it.

Their *faith* in Him was proved by their pilgrimage. They walked by faith. They would not have undertaken the journey from the City of Destruction to the City Celestial but for their faith in the history, the word, the existence, and the character of their Prince. It was precisely this which occasioned them to

differ from their fellow-men. It was this which gave them that elevation of character which distinguished them. It was this which raised them above their old associates, above themselves, and above the world. It was this which made them strong and brave and diligent. As we read of them we may well desire to possess a faith like theirs. It is a wretched thing to be the victim of distrust. There have been men who plumed themselves on the distrust with which they regarded all other persons whatsoever. They boasted of their incapacity for anything like hero-worship. They knew their own venality, and suspected all about them of a like want of principle. There was no human being who could not be bought at some price. The pretensions of some to patriotism, of others to personal purity, and of others to piety, were hollow in every instance. Such sceptics, however, were necessarily unhappy. It is well to have some

faith in those who appear to be better than ourselves. It is well to have some reverence for those who seem more worthy of respect. It is emphatically well to have a boundless confidence in that Perfect One whose nature and ministry are described in Holy Writ. The experience of `myriads of our race confirms the testimony of those Scriptures which assure us that such faith is inseparable from a higher life than that to which those who are destitute of it attain.

The *hope* with which the pilgrims regarded their Prince was of a kind with which all Christians are more or less familiar. One of them being asked the question, "What is it that makes you so desirous to go to Mount Zion?" thus commenced his reply, "Why, there I hope to see Him alive that did hang dead on the cross." In proportion as we are enabled to cherish this hope will it be well with us. It is by this hope that we are saved. It extinguishes

every emotion which is in any degree germane to doubt or diffidence, despondency or despair. It comes to the man who is menaced by such things, and prompts him to say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." It enables every man who is animated by it to struggle successfully with the corruptions of his own nature: "for every man that hath this hope in him," says the apostle, in speaking of his Lord, "purifieth himself even as he is pure." It is well described by another apostle as "a living hope," and by yet another as "a good hope through grace." Other hopes may be disappointed, but this one never can. The hope of the hypocrite is like a spider's web, but this one takes hold with an anchor's grasp of that which is within the veil.

The *love* with which the pilgrims regarded

their Prince was most intense. One of them declared that when Christ was first revealed to him as his Saviour, he found his affections running over with love to His name, His people, and His ways. He longed also to do something for His honour and glory ; and thought that, if he had a thousand gallons of blood in his body, he could spill it all for His sake. Many have felt thus, and not a few have given expression to this feeling by a self-denial which involved pain, loss, shame, and death, on their part. The love which Christians cherish for their Lord, when perfected, will constitute their obedience to Divine law. They are prone to disobedience at present, but are destined to attain to a state of perfect holiness. The law requires us to love both God and man ; and Christ is both. When, therefore, our love to Him has become the regnant passion of our souls, and every rebellious feeling has been sent into everlasting

exile, the law will be fulfilled in us, and by us, as well as for us.

The *pleasure* with which the pilgrims regarded their Prince was such as to compensate, and more than compensate, them for the trouble they experienced in His service. One of them spoke of the "golden hours," in which all that perplexed and annoyed him at other times was vanquished. Those golden hours were seasons when he thought upon the Saviour's grace in dying on his behalf, securing his justification, affording him the evidence of his acceptance with God, and providing a home for him in the heavenly world. Another pilgrim declared, when passing through the River of Death, that he had loved to hear his Lord mentioned, to set his foot in the print of His shoe, and to feed upon His word; that His name had been sweeter to him than all perfumes, and that His voice had been most sweet. There is no pleasure upon earth to

be compared with the delight of Christians in their Prince. The bridegroom does not so delight in his bride, nor parents in their children, as do Christians in Him who is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.

The *loyalty* of the pilgrims to their Prince was such as was sure to result from the feelings which have been noticed. Regarding Him as the rightful Ruler of the universe, knowing Him to be actually enthroned in the Celestial City, believing that His authority will be ultimately established on earth as elsewhere, convinced of His personal and princely merit, and aware that He was their own greatest Benefactor, they might well behave themselves as His loyal subjects, and they did. Thus when they passed through Vanity Fair, and were solicited to buy the things which were there exposed for sale, they did as their Lord Himself had done before them in the same place.

The Prince of pilgrims had passed through the town towards His own country on a fair day, and the Lord of the Fair had invited Him to buy of its vanities, taking Him from street to street, and showing Him all the kingdoms of the world, in order to allure Him to make purchases. But Beelzebub had no success in this matter. The Blessed One was not to be tempted by his utmost art, and left the town without spending a farthing on its vanities. The example of their Prince was not lost upon the pilgrims; and all Christians must take heed in some degree to the circumstance that Christ hath left them an example that they should follow in His steps. It is their duty to display their loyalty in this manner, those who habitually fail to do so not being Christians at all. It is their interest to thus display it, however the contrary may appear true, seeing that the sufferings of this present time, according to the reckoning of

those best qualified to come to a conclusion on the subject, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to them. It is, moreover, their delight to do so, their experience corresponding with certain passages of Scripture which contain what must appear to many readers "hard sayings," though not such to them. Compare what is said by Christ on this subject in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 10-12) with the language of Luke in Acts v. 41, and that of James at the commencement of his General Epistle, and be convinced that the service of their Saviour is a luxury not only to those Christians who have entered the Celestial City, but to those also who still pursue their pilgrimage thither through this world.

III.

CHRIST IS THE THEME OF HIS PEOPLE'S MOST DELIGHTFUL CONVERSATION. The pilgrims had much pleasant conversation respect-

ing their Prince. They spake of Him to each other, to their friends, to their enemies, and to their acquaintances, as often as they had occasion and opportunity.

That was a very interesting conversation, *e.g.*, which Christiana and her companions had with their Guide respecting the righteousness of their Prince. Those who want to study Bunyan's theology should not overlook that Guide's discourse. Mr. Greatheart attributed a fourfold righteousness to Christ: viz., that which belongs to His Divinity, that which belongs to His humanity, that which belongs to His mediatorial office, and that which He imputes to His people in their justification. Is this fanciful? Perhaps: yet no student of the Scriptures can show that it is not substantially true. Leaving to those who like them all mere theological distinctions and disputes, let us be content to be clad in the righteousness of our Prince, and aspire to keep

our garments always white and unspotted from the world.

The same parties had some conversation also about the humiliation of the Lord, during which it was remarked that when He was on earth He loved to walk in the valley of humiliation, and had His country-house therein. The meaning of this is that Christ delighted in those acts of condescension to men and submission to God which the Scriptures attribute to Him. Oh, that the mind which was thus in Him were also in us! All Christians must indeed possess it in some degree, but what Christian has not occasion to deplore his own sinful pride?

The pilgrims had much to say concerning the goodness of their Prince to a previous pilgrim, who may be regarded as the representative of a large class. This was Mr. Fearing, whose name, however, does not denote that he was a mere coward. He was not afraid of those lions on the Hill Difficulty which had so

terrified even Christian. He was not daunted by those who exercised authority in Vanity Fair. But he was afraid that he should come short of the Celestial City; afraid to cross the Slough of Despond; afraid to knock at the Wicket Gate; afraid to seek admission to the Interpreter's House; afraid that he should be hanged on the gibbet to which Simple, Sloth, and Presumption were consigned; afraid to make himself at home in the House Beautiful; afraid of the fiends which haunted the Valley of the Shadow of Death; and afraid of that river through which pilgrims must pass to the Celestial City. But his Prince was good to this poor man, so that his fears were successively subdued, and it was noticed that special grace was displayed towards him. A sunshiny morning tempted him across the Slough; the Gate-Keeper and the Interpreter addressed him in the most loving and reassuring manner; the Valley of the Shadow of Death was un-

usually quiet as he went through it, those enemies having then a special check from his Lord who were wont to pester pilgrims in it; while the water was so low when he forded the River of Death that it scarcely covered his feet. All other pilgrims who heard of this one's experience of the Saviour's love were certain to be much encouraged thereby; and we too should be encouraged by what we have seen of the spiritual progress and happy death of some whose distressing doubts of their own interest in Christ were productive of a despondent demeanour on their part during the greater part of their pilgrimage. They had a Friend in their Prince who so aided them in time of need that they accomplished their journey notwithstanding the doubts and fears which weighed them down.

The pilgrims did not omit to make mention of their Prince's death. In the House Beautiful and elsewhere they spoke of it. They made

repeated reference to the Cross on which He died. It is inevitable that all His disciples should be prone to make that cross their theme, and assuredly such conversation is attended with manifold advantage. It is very instructive and consolatory ; is favourable to the maintenance of a lively gratitude to the Saviour, and adapted to ward off various evils ; is a means of grace to other human beings, and well pleasing to that Divine Being who hearkened and heard them that feared the Lord in the days of Malachi when they spake often one to another ; and who declared that they should be His when He made up His jewels, and that He would spare them as a man spareth his only son that serveth him.

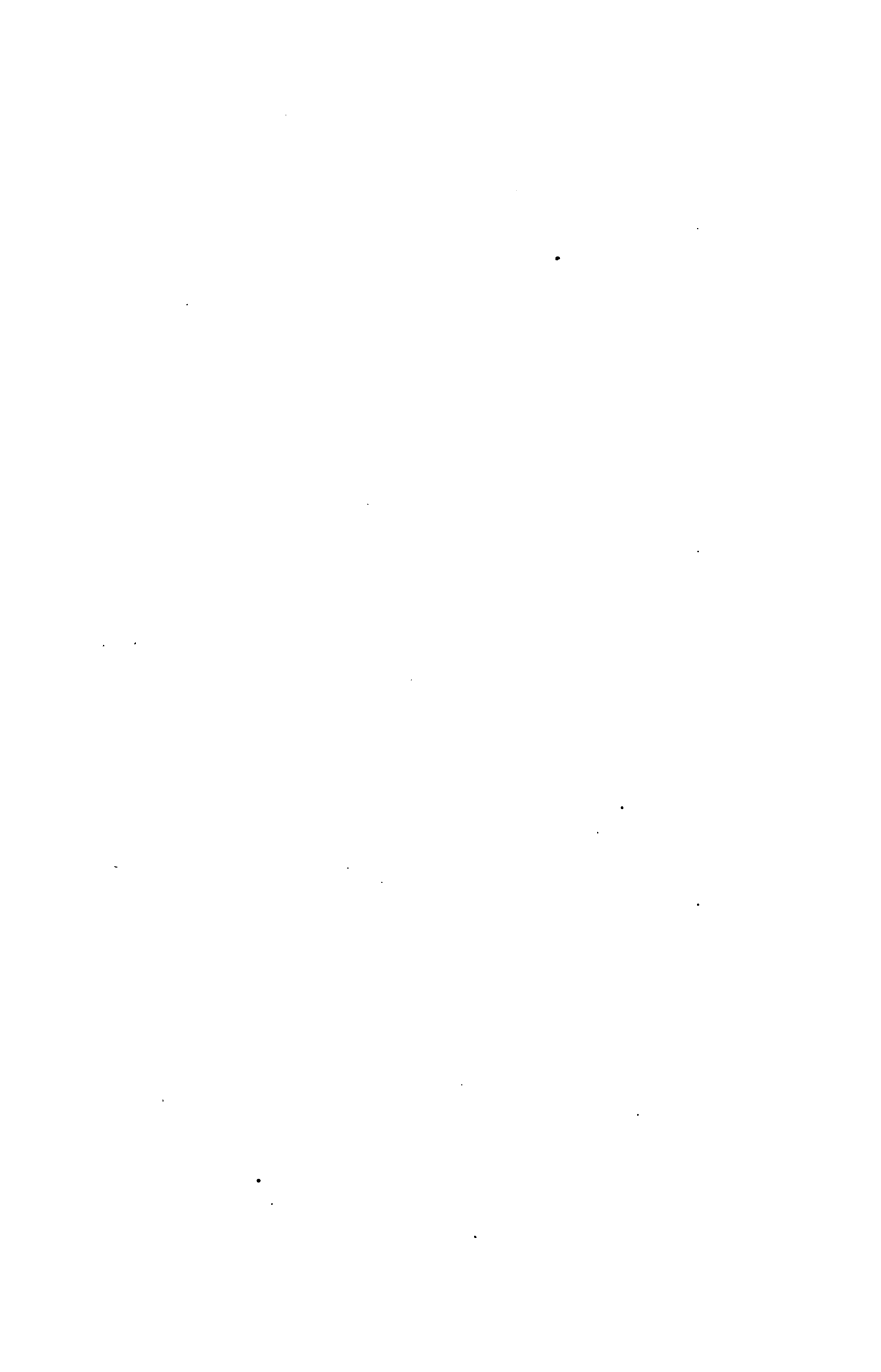
It is not only in the prosaic speech which they employ in the discussion of common things that Christians mention their Prince. They love to celebrate His grace and glory in songs which gifted men have taught them to use.

Those songs are delightful to those who sing them with the understanding and the heart, but they are destined to be succeeded by sweeter and loftier numbers than their own. In the Celestial City the pilgrims praise their Prince as they cannot praise Him here. Looking after two of the pilgrims as they entered its gates, the Dreamer saw many men on its golden pavements who had completed their course before them, having crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal. He heard, moreover, all the bells of the city ring again for joy; while the newly-arrived pilgrims themselves sang with a loud voice, "Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the LAMB for ever and ever!" He felt when the gates were shut that he wished himself among the singers of that happy place. There are times when we also ardently long to join them in their service

of grateful praise ; and at such times we are
apt to sing as best we can on earth,—

“ Oh, that with yonder sacred throng,
We at His feet may fall ;
Join in the everlasting song,
And crown Him Lord of all ! ”

**THE
PILGRIMS AND THE INTERPRETER.**



VIII.

THE PILGRIMS AND THE INTERPRETER.

"The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."—*Matt. xi. 12.*

THERE will be something to say in another discourse of the intercourse between the pilgrims and the Interpreter. We shall have to glance at many things to which their attention was directed by that Divine and gracious Teacher. Those things would well repay, however, a gaze rather than a glance; and it seems desirable that at least one of them should be selected as the object of a somewhat more sustained regard than circumstances allow us to bestow on the others. That which illustrates the inspired words now before us will answer this purpose at least as well as any

of the other things in and about the Interpreter's House. The pilgrims were shown a stately palace, on the roof of which were persons clad in glittering garments, while near its door were other persons who seemed anxious to enter, but afraid to make the attempt. Their fear was occasioned by the attitude of certain armed men in the doorway, who were evidently prepared to oppose any who should seek admission to the interior. There was yet another person, however, who seemed to expect that the attempt would be made, for he was provided with writing materials, to record the name of the adventurer. Nor had he long to wait: for a resolute-looking man went up to him, and having desired him to set down his name, put a helmet on his head, drew his sword, and rushed upon the armed men at the door. A fierce conflict, in which he gave and received many wounds, terminated in the triumph of this hero; and as he pressed into the palace, a

voice of welcome was heard, which came from those who were there before him,—

“Come in, come in : eternal glory thou shalt win !”

So he went in, and was clad in such garments as they. Well might the pilgrim Christian smile, and say that he verily thought he knew the meaning of this. The meaning plainly is that “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” The Interpreter thus directed attention to an invaluable treasure which is placed within the reach of all who are made acquainted with the gospel, and to the manner in which that treasure may be appropriated by them.

I.

The TREASURE to which the Interpreter directed the attention of the pilgrims was the Kingdom of Heaven. The idea of a theocracy pervades the Scriptures. It is a subject which has many aspects, and may be regarded from many different points of view. It is illus-

trated in various ways by the sacred writers, and likened to many different things. The kingdom of God, or of heaven, is said by them to be like one thing or like another according as they wish to set forth this or that aspect of the truth respecting it. Our Saviour repeatedly described it as a treasure. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in the field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." The same idea is presented by the text, which implies, though it does not state in so many words, that the kingdom of heaven is a treasure. If you ask what this kingdom is, it may be sufficient to reply that it is the aggregate of evangelical blessings; or, in other words, that blessing

which comprehends all those good things that Christ has purchased for His people. In order that we may be the more impressed with the preciousness of this treasure, let us entertain two or three considerations germane to the subject.

1. The privileges incident to the possession of this treasure bear witness to its preciousness. Observe what is said in the context. "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." This does not mean that the Christian who is most deficient in intellect and influence is absolutely superior to John, and therefore to any of the illustrious persons who flourished under the old dispensation. You and I are in no danger of

supposing ourselves to be superior, *e. g.*, to Moses or Elijah, to Joshua or David, to Samuel or Ezra, to Isaiah or Daniel. The Saviour's meaning would seem to be that the honour which belongs to every member of the kingdom of heaven *as such* is greater than that which belonged to any prophet, prince, or priest, or even to His own immediate herald, as the occupant of an honourable office or the possessor of those gifts which enabled him to discharge its functions. Those who are born of women are inferior to those who are not only born of women, but of God : and he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is born of God. Christ solemnly assured Nicodemus that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ;" and again, that "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." But was not John the Baptist himself a regenerated person? and were not many of the patriarchs, prophets, princes,

priests, and other illustrious persons of the old dispensation, regenerated? Unquestionably. It was precisely this circumstance which chiefly rendered them honourable in the sight of God. John the Baptist, considered as a member of God's kingdom, was greater than John the Baptist considered as a prophet or as the herald of God's anointed Son. The highest honour to which any human being can attain is that which belongs to those who are the children of God, not merely in that general sense in which all of us are His offspring, but also in that special sense in which some of us are such. The highest honour to which any human being can attain is that which belongs to those who are not only born of women, but of the Spirit. This peculiar relationship to God is no empty honour. It is associated with the pardon of our sins, the purification of our nature, and the prospect of unequalled, unending, and unutterable bliss. The man who has appropriated the

treasure of which we speak has heard a Voice saying to him, with an accent of Divine authority, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee!" He has felt the presence of a purifying power within his soul. He has seen a vision of the glory which awaits him, and which so far exceeds in splendour and attractiveness the glory of this world, that he is not to be lured, like other men, away from the road which leads to God's right hand. He has therefore appropriated a treasure, compared with which that material wealth for which so many persons plan and toil and sin is absolutely worthless.

2. The worth of this treasure is also attested by the efforts of those who were best informed on the subject to acquire and retain it. The language of one of them is eminently suggestive on this subject. "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things loss for the

excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them dung that I may win Christ and be found in him." Moreover, "this one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize." The apostle thus speaks of the most strenuous exertions, involving a severe self-denial, which was yet no self-denial in view of the prize for which he strove. The conduct thus described was by no means peculiar to himself. He was but a soldier in the noble army which God has called into the field to do battle with His enemies and their own. The world is not worthy of those who constitute that army. Many of them have exhibited a prowess in presence of their most powerful foes which it is impossible to surpass. They rejoiced when they were counted worthy to suffer shame in the service of their Saviour,


and counted not their lives dear to them if only they might finish their course with the joy which results from faithfulness in that service. They were abundantly willing to die by the cross, the halter, the axe, or the stake, if that were the will of God concerning them. There was only one thing they could not and would not do, viz., part with the treasure with which God had enriched them. They felt that obedience to the direction each of them had received through the angel of the Church in Philadelphia was essential: "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Notwithstanding pain and peril, danger and difficulty, and a thousand hardships they had to experience for the sake of God's kingdom, there was not one of them who might not have said most truthfully—

"I would not change my blest estate
For all the world calls good or great ;
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold."

They did say this by their labours and sufferings in the good cause, and thus made it clear that they regarded the kingdom of heaven as incomparably precious.

3. The value of this treasure appears, once more, from the cost of its production. The kingdom of heaven was created at an infinite expense. Its establishment cost the life of its Founder, and that Founder was the Son of God. Any parent we know would think the life of an only and beloved child an immense price to pay for any advantage whatsoever. Any person of our acquaintance would think his own life an immense price to pay for any conceivable blessing. But God gave His only begotten Son, and Christ gave Himself, that the kingdom of heaven might be set up. The price thus paid for the production of the prize to which our attention is now directed was infinite, yet not excessive; for it is written of the Person who was at this expense, that "He shall see of the travail of

his soul, and shall be satisfied." This assertion is explained by the history of our Saviour's resurrection and ascension, and by the predictions of His future glory. Thus the kingdom of heaven is infinitely precious to its Founder; and as for the members of that kingdom—the subjects of that Founder—they are destined to share in the satisfaction of their Lord, and do share therein to some extent already. They triumph in His victory, glory in His honour, and rejoice in His joy, in some degree at present. It is to the future, however, they must look for a more perfect realisation of the Treasure thus obtained. Not till they have entered the World of Light, and bowed before the Throne, and taken some part in the hallowed songs and services which are rendered there, can they fully appreciate that Treasure. Happily for us He who alone could pay the price of its production was able to appreciate it beforehand. He knew what glory would redound to His Father, what



satisfaction would accrue to Himself, what scope would be provided for the operations of His Spirit, and what unspeakable blessedness would be experienced by His people, as the result of its establishment. Hence He was willing and even eager to die; nor did He refuse to die upon the cross. The pain and shame of crucifixion were willingly endured by Him, together with all the peculiar horrors of His passion, in order that the kingdom of heaven might exist, and operate, and triumph, and endure, to the ages of ages.

This invaluable Treasure is represented in the Scriptures as placed within reach of those who are made acquainted with the gospel. When John lifted up his voice in the desert the burden of his preaching was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" When the Lord Jesus Christ Himself proclaimed the truth in Palestine, the burden of His preaching was precisely the same as that of His

forerunner, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" When the Saviour sent forth His twelve apostles on their first missionary tour, He directed them to announce, wherever they exercised their ministry, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand!" When He afterwards sent out the other seventy disciples on a similar errand, He instructed them also to announce to their hearers, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you!" Anything which is "at hand" is indeed near. It is near enough to be touched. It is near enough to be grasped. When, therefore, those who proclaim the gospel assure you that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, the meaning is that all the blessings comprehended in that kingdom—all the blessings purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ—are within your reach. This is no fiction. It is not an exaggerated statement. It is not inconsistent with any other statement or doctrine of the Word of God. The preacher

has no means of knowing whether his hearers are numbered with the elect or not. He is unable to say which of them will be ultimately saved or lost. He is destitute of any private intelligence as to their predestination or the contrary. But he is well assured that pardon and justification, that peace and purity, that admission into the Divine family and a joint-heirship with the Heir of all things, are within their reach; and he is bound to call upon them, as I now call upon you, to put forth the hand and grasp this Treasure—*i. e.*, the Treasure which comprehends all these blessings—while it is near. If it cannot be said to every one who listens to the gospel, “Thou art not far from the kingdom of God,” it can be said to all who hear it, “The kingdom of God is nigh unto you.” But this may not always be true. Those who neglect to grasp this Treasure must not suppose that they will always have an opportunity of doing so. “Behold now is the

accepted time; behold to-day is the day of salvation."

II.

We may now proceed to consider the manner in which this Treasure may be obtained. According to the text, and according to the Interpreter, "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

1. This language arrests our attention by its apparent incongruity. It is the language of the Prince of Peace, and relates to His own kingdom. An apostle tells us that "the kingdom of God is peace," and calls upon us therefore to "follow after the things which make for peace." Peace is repeatedly spoken of in the Scriptures as peculiarly belonging to the people of God, and He is described as "the God of peace." Most of our Saviour's sayings are such as seem appropriate to Him. The words with which this chapter concludes appear thus appropriate. "Come unto me, all

ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." These expressions correspond with the notions we obtain from the general tenour of Holy Writ of our Saviour's character and kingdom. It is otherwise with the language before us. We know that other kingdoms have been obtained in the manner thus indicated. We know that in numerous instances the successful military adventurer has exchanged his saddle for a throne, his helmet for a diadem, his sword for a sceptre, and his tent for a palace. But the kingdom of heaven is not like other kingdoms. Christ Himself declared, "My kingdom is not of this world," and gave that as a reason why His subjects did not fight like the champions of other kingdoms. How then shall we explain those other words of His which

chiefly claim our consideration at present? The explanation is that there is a violence which does not resort to carnal weapons, and a force which has no need of them. On reflection, we cease to wonder at what is here said, for we remember that the same thing is variously expressed in certain other passages of Scripture. The Bible abundantly testifies that those who desire to obtain spiritual blessings must seek them with diligence and energy. If you would enter into the rest which remaineth for the people of God, you must labour. If you would enter in at that strait gate, which all pilgrims to the Celestial City must pass through, you must strive. If you would wear the crown of glory which fadeth not away, you must so run that ye may obtain it. If you would lay hold on eternal life, you must fight the good fight of faith; for "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

2. This language suggests the worthiest exercise of our emotional nature. There is a fund of energy and passion within our hearts which may be either wasted or turned to very high account. It is wasted by those who allow it to slumber as long as it will lie dormant, and repress it with false shame as often as circumstances beyond their control arouse it. It is wasted also by those who allow it to expend itself upon unworthy objects, such as the worldling is apt to pursue, and which when attained are unable to promote the true welfare of men. It is worse than wasted when, having been aroused by the book you read, the sermon you hear, the prayer-meeting you attend, it is permitted to die away again, without any effort on your part to live as it prompted you to live while you experienced its power. It is worse than wasted also when it is roused to such a pitch that it exerts an undue influence on the life of its subject, so that reason and conscience

are unable to control it, and enthusiasm degenerates into fanaticism. But it is turned to high account when it is exposed to those influences which arouse, which cherish, and which employ it as the Word of God suggests. And what does the Word of God suggest on the subject? Does it not suggest that the salvation of our own souls, the spiritual welfare of our fellow men, and the glory of our gracious God, demand and deserve our utmost diligence? The pent up passion of the human spirit, which must find vent sometimes and somehow, will be best employed in the service of the Saviour, and in the appropriation of those blessings which He has purchased and placed within our reach. There is a generous religious enthusiasm which elevates the character of its subject, and is ever exhibited by the noblest members of our race. It sustains and cheers them in the hour of conflict, and ensures their ultimate success. It is awakened and maintained by that Holy

Spirit who is as willing to animate one person as another. If, therefore, you would appropriate the treasure mentioned in the text, implore Him to arouse within you the necessary energy in relation to it ; for "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

3. This language points to a spiritual condition which men are not prone to realise. They are not apt to display violence and employ force in relation to the blessings of the gospel. Until such time as they experience the awakening influence of God's Spirit they evince no earnestness respecting the acquisition of those blessings.

Spiritual apathy is quite compatible with the utmost energy in relation to secular things. There are multitudes of men and women who are most active in worldly matters and most indifferent to all that concerns the welfare of the soul. We read in the New Testament of

a rich and prosperous man who carefully considered the most profitable disposition of his wealth, with a view to his future retirement from business and abandonment of himself to a life of luxury, but not a word is said of any anxiety on his part respecting his spiritual welfare. There was no such anxiety; and it was said to him, as it may at any time be said to such an infatuated person, "Fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee."

Spiritual apathy is quite compatible also with the possession of great religious privileges. There is a Scripture which denounces woe on them which are at ease in Zion, and this is a woe that many among us may easily incur. The Sabbaths, the Sanctuaries, the Scriptures, and the other religious privileges with which we are brought in contact, do not ensure any degree of spiritual zeal on our part, and many of us are utterly destitute of such zeal. It has always been so. It was so in the time of our

Lord. His countrymen and contemporaries were eminently privileged by reason of His own ministry and that of John the Baptist ; but observe what He says on the subject. He likens that generation to children who treat with indifference the various efforts of their playmates to induce them to share their amusements. As children will neither play at a wedding nor a funeral at the call of their companions sometimes, so the people of that time would neither respond to the appeals of the ascetic John nor to those of the sociable Son of man. Choraisin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum refused to repent, notwithstanding the ministry which had been exercised in their streets. Even so do the people of our own time and country listen without any adequately responsive emotion to the curses of the law and the blessings of the gospel as proclaimed by every variety of utterance on the subject.

4. This language is illustrated by many of

the remarkable narratives of Holy Writ. The doctrine here laid down is taught also by them. The violence here mentioned is abundantly exemplified by them. It should therefore be profitable to refer to some of them before we take leave of this subject.

The experience of Jacob exemplified the truth under consideration. He was by no means a violent man in the ordinary sense of the term. He was smooth and supple rather than violent. In the former part of his life, and in relation to secular advantages, he was addicted to fraud rather than to force in his efforts to acquire the things he coveted. But he afterwards became chiefly anxious to obtain the Divine blessing, and employed force in order to do so. When he wrestled with that mysterious Personage, who first seemed human, then angelic, then Divine, he did so in the conviction that God's blessing was thus to be acquired. Hence his adversary crippled him in vain, and entreated to be let go

in vain. The patriarch clung to him with determined violence, and exclaimed, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me!" His violence resulted in victory, and he obtained the blessing he craved by the force he thus employed. Sneer not at this account, ye sceptics. Say not that a man could not thus conquer God. The Lord Himself supplied the patriarch with the strength which enabled him to prevail in that contest. It was His intention to bless him from the first. He appeared to him for that purpose. But He deemed it well to withhold the blessing till His servant was rendered fully sensible of its value by the discipline of that eventful conflict. We learn, too, from the prophet Hosea, that it was by his spiritual rather than his bodily agony, by his prayers rather than by his muscular exertions, that Jacob thus prevailed.

The experience of Moses also exemplified this truth. That illustrious man was bent on

procuring the pardon of the people placed under his care. They had sinned, and God talked of destroying them ; but Moses stood before Him face to face upon the mountain, and wrested their pardon from Him by the violence of his prayer on their behalf. That prayer was not to be prevented by the bribe which was tendered to him. "Now, therefore, let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them ; and I will make of thee a great nation." Moses would not let the Lord alone, and the Lord yielded to the force which His servant employed. His prayer was accepted, and his people pardoned.

The experience of Ruth exemplified this truth in a very interesting manner. Born and bred a heathen, she had married into a Hebrew family, and had learned that spiritual blessings were peculiarly accessible to the Hebrew people. Appreciating the value of those blessings, she was most anxious to maintain the connection

she had formed with the chosen people. Accordingly, when death had stricken her husband, his father, and his brother, and her husband's mother returned to her own land, Ruth could not be persuaded to part from her. Orpah, whose circumstances corresponded with her own, was persuaded to let their mother-in-law return without her; but when Naomi sought to induce Ruth to act like Orpah, she elicited the memorable reply, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me!" Such violence was not to be resisted. It is said of Naomi that "when she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her." Moreover, it appears from

the sequel that the violence which thus prevailed with Naomi prevailed also with God. He prospered the proselyte who appreciated the blessings lavished on His people, and she obtained her full share of those blessings.

The experience of Elisha exemplified this truth in an equally interesting manner. He knew that the prophet Elijah was to be removed from earth, that he was to be that prophet's successor, and that the requisite qualification for the office to which he was thus appointed must be obtained through Elijah before they were parted. Hence he determined to remain with his master to the last, and Elijah vainly endeavoured to get rid of him before the time of his own removal. Neither at Gilgal, nor at Bethel, nor at Jericho, nor at Jordan, would the younger prophet remain at the elder's request; and when they had crossed the river, Elijah spoke to Elisha on the subject which occupied them both. "Ask what I shall do for thee

before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion [*i.e.*, the heir's portion, the one being the official heir to the other] of thy spirit be upon me." And he said, "Thou hast asked a hard thing: if thou see me taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so." There was no knowing what awful revelation or experience might attend the removal of Elijah. No mere curiosity could have kept Elisha at his master's side till then. But he was animated by that courage which prompts men to have recourse to violence when necessary, and was prepared to employ force if the blessing he desired could be obtained in no other way. In the solitude of the desert his spirit remained dauntless; and when the whirlwind arose, and the chariot and horses of fire approached, he refused to retreat. Away went Elijah, and aloft; but his mantle descended to assure Elisha that the double portion he had asked

was bestowed on him; and the sons of the prophets who watched for his return were right when they said, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha!"

The experience of the Syrophenician mother mentioned in the New Testament afforded another exemplification of the same truth. Her daughter was possessed by a demon; and hearing that Jesus was approaching her country, she resolved to entreat His help. But she met with a series of discouragements. The Saviour did indeed approach her country, but would not enter it. As far as the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, which were also the coasts, or border, of Palestine, He came, but no farther. He was willing to exercise His blessed ministry anywhere in the Holy Land, but not elsewhere. The woman determined, however, that if He would not come to her, she would go to Him. Accordingly, she betook herself to the place where He was staying, to find that He preserved all

possible privacy, and could not be easily approached. Still she pressed into His presence and presented her petition; but he answered her not a word. The only response to her appeal came from His disciples, who entreated Him to send her away; and, we must suppose, that they meant with her petition granted. He replied to their request, but not in such a way as to satisfy her, telling them that His mission was only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. She refused to accept this reply to others as a denial to her own request, and again entreated His help. He then no longer declined to address her, but His language was not of a kind to reassure her, for He told her that it was not fit to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. "Truth Lord," said she, with what Luther calls the ingenuity of faith, "yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." She conquered Christ, as Jacob had conquered the angel long before, so

that the Saviour exclaimed, "O woman, great is thy faith! Be it done unto thee even as thou wilt;" and she returned to find her daughter completely healed.

The experience of Bartimæus afforded yet another exemplification of this truth. That blind man sat begging at the gate of Jericho, when he became aware that a great throng of people went through, attracted by the presence of our Lord. He therefore resolved to beg of Him: not money, however, but sight. Accordingly, he lifted up his voice, and cried, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" But this was displeasing to some there, and they charged him to hold his peace. He was too much in earnest, however, to be thus silenced: so much in earnest, indeed, that he cried the louder for their attempt to shut his mouth. Again and again, above the tumult of the crowd, the plaintive prayer was heard, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" The result

was that Jesus heard, called, questioned, and healed the poor blind man; saying to him, "Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole."

Thus, then, we have seen that the doctrine of the text, which the Interpreter illustrated for the benefit of the pilgrims, is not peculiar to one passage of Scripture. It is repeatedly and variously taught by the Word of God. If you would appropriate the spiritual blessings within your reach, or if you would appropriate them more fully, you must not only resort to the means of grace, but must avail yourselves of them with all possible earnestness. The successful study of the Scriptures needs diligence. The successful supplication of Divine grace needs fervour. The successful service of the Saviour needs enthusiasm. Anything like apathy, lethargy, or indifference in spiritual things is inimical to spiritual prosperity. If you would dwell in the stately palace, if you would conquer the armed opponents of those who seek to enter it, if you

would acquire the Treasure which is mentioned in the text, and which alone can enrich you to all eternity, your spirit must be stirred to its depths, and kindled with a resolute determination to do and dare all that duty demands of Christ's disciples, by that Holy Spirit who is able to transform the coward into a hero and the sleeper into an active servant of God. For "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

**THE
PILGRIMS AND THE CHURCH.**




IX.

THE PILGRIMS AND THE CHURCH.

"The house of God, which is the church of the living God."—

1 Tim. iii. 15.

 HE Church is repeatedly likened in the Scriptures to a house. It is described as the Temple or Palace of the Most High. It is said to be composed of living stones; and founded upon that LIVING STONE which is disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. To the people of God it is said, Ye . . . "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are

builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." From this representation of the Church is derived the Christian idea of *edification*. We are exhorted to follow the "things wherewith we may edify another." "Let every one of us," says the apostle, "please his neighbour for his good to edification." The Christian ministry is said to have been instituted for the edification of the Church ; and happy are those who, in the exercise of any part of that ministry, are instrumental in adding stones to the spiritual edifice, or in fixing them firmly in their proper places. But Christians are not only described in Scripture as the stones of God's house, but also as the members of His household. They are not only His dwelling-place, but His family. Bunyan, being familiar with these ideas, describes four houses in his *Allegory*, of which each is an emblem of the Church.

I.

One of them is the House of the Interpreter, in which the pilgrims were instructed, nourished, rested, cleansed, and beautified.

I. The pilgrims were instructed in this house. The disciples of Christ need to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Hence the Interpreter is represented as directing the attention of his guests to a variety of significant and instructive things in and about his residence. Our own attention has already been occupied with one of those things, and we may now glance at some of the others.

There was, *e. g.*, the portrait of a Christian minister, who was depicted with his eyes raised to heaven, the Word of God in his hand, the law of truth written on his lips, the world behind his back, a crown of gold over his head, in the attitude of one pleading with his fellow-men. They were told that the original of this portrait was the only person authorised to be

the pilgrims' guide in the more difficult parts of the pilgrimage, and they were invited, therefore, to mark the picture well. There are many professed ministers of God's Word, and many recognised as such by society, who are unworthy of the office they claim. They are wolves in sheep's clothing, false prophets, and blind leaders of the blind. Happily, however, the Holy Spirit enables those who are subject to His influence to distinguish the true minister from the false, so that they are not misled like too many of their fellow-men.

Another thing to which the Interpreter called the attention of his guests was a fire which burnt brighter and hotter, notwithstanding the constant effort of one who stood by it to put it out. The Interpreter explained that this fire denoted the work of grace in the heart, and that he who sought to quench it was the devil. He then proceeded to show how it was that the evil one was baffled. On the other side of the

wall against which the fire was kindled was a man who continually and secretly fed it with oil. This man represented the Saviour; and the truth thus taught is that His agency renders it impossible for Satan to accomplish the ruin of God's people.

Another thing the pilgrims saw in the Interpreter's House was an iron cage in a dark room. A man sat in this cage with downcast eyes, sighing bitterly. In reply to one who questioned him on his condition, this man described himself as having once been a fair and flourishing professor of religion, albeit he was now the victim of despair. This lamentable change was the result of his own perversity. He had ceased to be watchful and sober, had sinned against the light of God's Word, had grieved the Holy Spirit, had tempted the devil, had provoked God to anger, had put Christ to an open shame, and had hardened his heart to such a degree that repentance was impossible. He

declared that all the men in the world could not liberate him from that iron cage, and that nothing remained to him but that fiery indignation which is to devour the adversaries of God. "O eternity!" he exclaimed, "eternity! how shall I grapple with the misery that I must meet with in eternity?" The wisdom of Bunyan in telling this story of the iron cage after that of the fire which could not be quenched by the adversary is apparent. A person may so presume that a work of grace has been wrought in his heart as to become careless respecting his practice. He may say within himself that he need not trouble himself about the temptations to which he is exposed, inasmuch as Christ is stronger than Satan and he himself is a Christian. It is well, however, for him to be reminded that while there is some reason to hope that a work of grace is being wrought within him, it is possible for the most fair and flourishing professor to become the victim of despair. The

Slough of Despond is bad enough, Doubting Castle is worse, but this Iron Cage is worst of all.

Another thing seen by the pilgrims in the Interpreter's House was the spectacle of one who had just left his bed and was trembling as he put on his clothes. This man explained that he had had a fearful dream. The heavens had grown black, thunder had rolled, lightning had flashed, the clouds had drifted furiously, a trumpet had sounded, and a Man had appeared seated on a cloud and attended by the thousands of heaven. Then flames burst forth, and a voice proclaimed, "Arise ye dead, and come to judgment!" At this the rocks rent, the graves opened, and the dead came forth. The dreamer had been alarmed to find the eye of the Judge fixed upon himself, and found it impossible to escape its penetrating glance. In the depth of his distress on this account he awoke. The lesson to be learned from this is obvious. "Flee

from the wrath to come!" "Prepare to meet thy God." "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained."

The last thing I shall mention as having been seen by the pilgrims in the Interpreter's House was a great ugly spider clinging to the wall of the best room it contained. They were surprised to see this, and nothing more than this, until the Interpreter asked whether there was no more than that one spider in all that spacious room. Then the water stood in Christiana's eyes, and Mercy blushed, while the children covered their faces, for they felt that they themselves resembled the foul insect before them. But the Interpreter went on to show that they might take hold with the hand of faith of the best place in the palace of the heavenly King, notwithstanding the venom of sin within

them. This is at once a very humbling and a very encouraging lesson, and the wise will lay it to heart.

These were only some of the sights to which the Interpreter directed the attention of his guests. They went with him not only into the various significant rooms which his mansion contained, but also into the slaughter-house, the garden, and the field connected with that mansion. In all these they saw things which were well worthy of their regard. Moreover, he conveyed his instructions to them in more than one way. He gave utterance to a number of proverbs in their hearing. It will suffice to quote one or two of them at present. "One leak will sink a ship, and one sin will destroy a sinner." "He that lives in sin, and looks for happiness hereafter, is like him that soweth cockle, and thinks to fill his barn with wheat or barley." There is no teacher like the Interpreter, and those who desire to obtain the

knowledge of God, and to become wise unto salvation, will do well to seek admission to his house.

2. The pilgrims were nourished in the House of the Interpreter. We read of a supper which was provided for them there, and we know that what is meant is the Lord's Supper, *i.e.*, the spiritual food of which the bread and wine are emblems—not the bread and wine themselves. It is very possible for a person to sit down at the Lord's table, to partake of the material food dispensed from it, and to leave it altogether unrefreshed in spirit. In order that the Christian may obtain spiritual nourishment at the Lord's table, he must have a clear conception of the blessings secured to himself by the death of his Divine Master. The strength thus obtained is sorely needed. It is needed in order that we may sustain the load of sorrow and anxiety allotted to us in the providence of God, that we may do battle with

our spiritual foes, that we may finish the work which is given us to do, and that we may perform the pilgrimage to which we are called.

The food obtained in the Interpreter's House was gratefully received by the pilgrims. Before they commenced eating there was One who gave thanks. When our Saviour instituted the Lord's Supper, He gave thanks for the bread and wine, which He afterwards distributed among His disciples. In imitation of His example we also give thanks, as often as we attend to the ordinance, for these are symbols of better blessings. We have abundant reason for thankfulness in remembrance of the Saviour's body, which was broken for us, and of the Saviour's blood, which was shed on our behalf. Christ Himself, whose flesh is true meat and whose blood is true drink, is the best of all the blessings which God has bestowed upon His people; and the language of their hearts therefore should ever be,

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!"

The food supplied in the Interpreter's House occasioned gladness as well as gratitude. The pilgrims heard music and a song while supper proceeded. There may well be melody in the hearts of those whom God feeds with the Bread of Life. There may well be rejoicing on the part of those who eat of that hidden Manna with which the spiritual strength of Christians is renewed. We need not wonder that many a saint who has experienced this gladness has been known to sing—

"My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss."

The nourishment received in the Interpreter's House was the more welcome by reason of the conversation which the Host condescended to hold with his guests. In reply to his questions they recounted their experience, to which

He responded with kind and gracious words. There is no true disciple of Christ who has not some experience of the fellowship or communion of the Holy Ghost. The Lord speaks to His people, and they speak to Him, as truly as we talk with each other from time to time. We address to Him our confessions, supplications, praises, and thanksgivings: He speaks to us through His word and His providence, so that we do not fail to recognise His voice. Those who find themselves enjoying this communion of the Holy Ghost can bear emphatic testimony to the truth of that saying of Holy Writ, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

3. The pilgrims were rested in the House of the Interpreter. After supper preparation was made for bed, and a good night's rest was enjoyed. Now what are we to understand by

this? A good bed is a great blessing, and a good night's rest is a greater one; but it is of spiritual rest we have now to think.

The nature of this rest is readily described. It is freedom from remorse and anxiety. It is the peace of God which passeth all understanding. It is the blessing bestowed upon all who heartily respond to those gracious words of the Lord Jesus: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." It is a great thing to be freed from remorse by the agency of the Holy Spirit. When He has appeased the conscience the words of Christ are fulfilled: "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." There are persons, however, whose consciences

have been pacified, who nevertheless allow themselves to be tortured with anxiety about many things. "What shall we eat? what shall we drink? wherewithal shall we be clothed?" The Saviour rebukes such anxiety. He reminds us that we have a Father in heaven whose providence embraces us and all our affairs. He exhorts us not to be anxious about the morrow, not to be careful and troubled about many things, not to be cumbered with much serving. The Holy Spirit gives effect to the Saviour's language on this subject, and the result is that God's people obtain spiritual rest.

This rest is necessary to the Christian. A little reflection will render this clear. There can be no spiritual health without it. Let a man be deprived of bodily repose and his physical health will be very soon impaired. So also the man who is not blest with spiritual repose will be soul-sick. Rest is needful to

the Christian's comfort. Remorse and anxiety are inimical to anything of the kind, as we all know (do we not?) by experience. Moreover, spiritual rest is necessary to the usefulness of God's people. "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." He who would emulate the Apostle's usefulness must learn the lesson which enabled Paul to say, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

4. The pilgrims were purified in the House of the Interpreter. After they had risen from the beds whereon they had rested, they desired to resume their journey; but he would not allow them to do so until they had been washed in his bath. They were therefore confided to the care of a damsel named Innocent, who took them to that bath and cleansed them from the soil they had gathered in travelling.

This bath does not denote the baptistry, but that which the baptistry itself denotes: viz.,

the laver of regeneration—*i.e.*, the Lord Jesus Christ. The defilement of sin can only be removed from those who are plunged into this bath; but “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.” The prediction of Zechariah has long been fulfilled, and we therefore have learned to sing—

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Emmanuel’s veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.”

The lesson taught by the account of the Interpreter’s bath is that Christians are sanctified—*i.e.*, made pure and holy—by the Spirit of God, and that He sanctifies them by bringing them into a union with Christ so close that it may be likened to the union of a man with the water of the bath in which he cleanses his body from impurity. It should here be observed that the mere coming to Christ does not make a man at once and perfectly holy. Some appear to think that a true Christian is fit

for the presence of God from the first, and they hold therefore that no one has a right to profess himself a Christian till he finds that all spiritual impurity has been removed from him. Hence they themselves abstain from this profession, forgetting those inspired words, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Sanctification is a gradual process, which commences after a man has come to Christ. It is ensured, but not completed, when he comes to Him. He enters at the Wicket Gate, and then proceeds to the Interpreter's House, where the bath is found. The work of sanctification will be completed in the case of every Christian. God's people are to appear before His throne without spot. The Celestial City is largely peopled already with the spirits of just men made perfect. That which has been done for them will be done also for their brethren who still abide in the flesh.

5. The pilgrims were beautified in the House of the Interpreter. Just as earthly parents are apt to adorn their children in various ways, so the Divine Parent takes pleasure in adorning His children by the agency of His Holy Spirit. The process by which the pilgrims were rendered lovely is described in the Allegory as twofold.

They were sealed. You know that the Scriptures frequently speak of God's people as sealed, the allusion being to certain Eastern customs, to which no particular reference need now be made. It is enough to say that the seal is significant of their relationship to God and of their consequent security, while it constitutes an ornament peculiar to themselves. The Interpreter having called for his seal, set his mark upon his guests, and thus occasioned their faces to resemble those of the angels. Did you ever see this mark? It is very conspicuous in some Christians. It was thus conspicuous

in the martyr Stephen, whose face, directed stedfastly to heaven, reflected the celestial glory, and was like the face of an angel. Sometimes you hear it said, "There is no mistake about So-and-So. He is no mere nominal Christian. His religion is no sham. If all who have made the same profession were only like him, there would be far more good done than at present." The explanation of this eulogy is that the man's mark is recognised. It is a happy circumstance, however, that when the mark which a Christian has received is obscured by his own imperfections, it yet cannot be erased; and that God can see it when it is invisible to others.

The pilgrims were also adorned with raiment which the Interpreter caused to be brought from his vestry for their use. It consisted of fine linen garments, clean and white, which occasioned those who were clad in them to look beautiful in each other's eyes. They were

clothed with humility, they were invested with the righteousness of saints, they had put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

II.

The House Beautiful is another emblem of the Church. But this house and that of the Interpreter do not quite denote the same thing. This denotes the visible, whereas that denotes the invisible Church. The invisible Church is composed of all whom Christ has redeemed. The visible Church is composed of all who profess to be the Saviour's disciples, and are recognised as such by their fellow-disciples.

The position of this palace is worthy of remark. The pilgrims did not arrive at the House Beautiful until some time after they had passed through the Wicket Gate, and had been entertained in the House of the Interpreter. The idea thus supplied is that a man must become a Christian before he can properly take

his place among the members of the visible Church. The propriety of this idea of things would seem to be obvious ; and yet the advocates of baptismal regeneration, who reverse it, are very numerous, and their disciples are more numerous still. They first assign to human beings a place in the visible Church, and then labour to make them worthy of it. It is for you to judge, in the light of Holy Writ, between their doctrine on this subject and that of the man who wrote the Pilgrim's Progress.

The inmates of this palace were of various classes. There were, *e.g.*, those who constantly resided there: viz., Discretion, Prudence, Piety, Charity, and Humble-mind. The names of these virgin-residents in the House Beautiful signify that the Church is the home of the Christian graces, and that its fellowship is adapted to promote the cultivation of those graces. But in addition to those who abode in the palace were those who only sojourned there

for a longer or shorter time. These were the pilgrims, who came to it one by one or in small parties, obtained rest and refreshment within its walls, and then departed. The same virtues are found in the Church on earth from age to age, but the same persons are not found in it. Those who are numbered with its members now will soon have passed away, and others will have taken their place. A voice is heard from time to time saying to one and another, "Arise ye and depart : this is not your rest." It is exceedingly interesting to notice that among those who sought and found a place in the House Beautiful were Christiana's children. In a former discourse it was pointed out that Bunyan believed that children might be Christians. It is clear from his account of this House that he also believed that children might be members of the visible Church. It were well if this opinion were more generally and thoroughly adopted by Christian men and

women. It is assuredly in accordance with the spirit and tenour of the New Testament. Nevertheless there are many who discourage their own children and other young persons from entering the Church, on the ground that they do not understand all that is involved in that act, and also that they may hereafter bring disgrace on their profession by misconduct which is not at present foreseen. But this is not more true of children than of their elders, and the fellowship of the Church ought to be as beneficial to the one class as to the other. Of course the children admitted to the Church would need to have special instruction in Divine things. Bunyan appears to have thought, like many other wise and good men, that children may be catechised with great advantage. He therefore represents Matthew, Samuel, Joseph, and James, as being catechised in the House Beautiful. We know that the employment of this method of instruction has been attended

with a certain amount of evil. The particular catechism adopted by this or by that religious denomination has practically usurped the place of the Bible. But it is not necessary to adopt any such particular catechism. The same questions need not always be put in the same words, and those questions will be most intelligently answered in the words of the children themselves. At all events the gates of the palace should not be shut against the children whose behaviour shows that they are pilgrims to the Celestial City. When those who are thus excluded become men and women, they will have acquired the habit of regarding themselves as outsiders, and it is too probable that this will prevent them from seeking a place among the professed disciples of Christ.

The privileges of those who sojourned in the House Beautiful were great and various. The pilgrims are described as visiting a number of places connected with it with very happy re-

sults. These were, the dining-room, where they partook of a Paschal Lamb; the bed-chamber, called Peace, "whose window opened towards the sun-rising;" the study, in which the records of the house—viz., the Scriptures—were preserved; the armoury, where pilgrims might be furnished with weapons for their own use, and be encouraged by the spectacle of various warlike relics which testified to the prowess of pilgrims in former times; the palace-roof, whence a cheering prospect of the path of duty was obtained; together with some other places of exceeding interest. But great as were the privileges enjoyed by the pilgrims who entered the House Beautiful, it was not absolutely necessary for them to enter that House. Those who say that there is no salvation beyond the pale of the Church are right if they mean the invisible, and wrong if they mean the visible Church. It is necessary to enter the Interpreter's House, but not to gain admission to the

Palace Beautiful. Hence one of the pilgrims, and one of the most eminent of them all, is described as passing by the gate of that palace. But though Faithful was a true pilgrim, and obtained a crown of glory in due time, it had been better for himself and for others if he had entered the House. He would have been as much refreshed by its good things as other pilgrims were, and Christian would have had his society in the hour of need. Moreover, he would have honoured his Master by entering the House which that Master had expressly built and furnished for the accommodation and refreshment of pilgrims like himself.

III.

The House of Gaius is another emblem of the Church. The pilgrims, being weary, desired to find an inn where they might obtain refreshment; and old Mr. Honest, one of their number, told them that they would soon come

to an inn kept by a very honourable disciple called Gaius. Accordingly they took up their quarters there for some time, and with great advantage to all concerned. We have hitherto regarded the Church on earth as a whole ; but we know that as a matter of fact it exists in sections, and the House of Gaius is doubtless intended to denote one of these sections. The account of this house is suggested by several passages of Scripture. In the parable of the Good Samaritan we read of an inn at which he left orders that the object of his compassion should be cared for at his expense. Many expositors suppose that inn to denote the Church, and accordingly Bunyan represents Gaius as refusing to charge the pilgrims for their entertainment, on the ground that the Good Samaritan had promised to settle their account on his return. The Innkeeper is called Gaius because Paul mentions a certain person as "Gaius mine host, and of the whole church." It is not cer-

tain that this Gaius is the one mentioned in the third Epistle of John; but on the departure of the pilgrims their Guide addressed him in the very words which constitute the fifth and sixth verses of that Epistle.

The House of Gaius is represented as the scene of very cheerful conversation on the part of those assembled in it. The supper provided by the host is minutely described, one of the dishes containing nuts which those at table cracked while they asked and answered riddles in the most friendly and cheerful manner possible. These nuts were hard texts of Scripture, and the riddles related to the spiritual experience of various parties. There was a certain homeliness about the intercourse of those who met in this House which deserves regard. It is of great importance that God's people should feel at home in the assemblies of their brethren. There cannot be an absolute equality in all respects, nor is it desirable that there should

be ; but it is possible for rich and poor, educated and ignorant, young and old, to know no man after the flesh, but rather to regard each other as members of the same spiritual brotherhood should. Then would the song be heard more frequently—

" Here would I find a settled rest
While others go and come ;
No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home."

The House of Gaius was a centre of Christian usefulness. From it those pilgrims who were able to carry arms sallied forth to attack Giant Slay-good, and they succeeded in rescuing Mr. Feeble-mind from his hands. Now every Christian community should be a centre of usefulness. There are many feeble-minded persons in danger of having the good within them slain by the giant powers of evil, and it is the business of those who constitute the Church to attempt their relief. There are also, of course, many other ways in which the Church

and its members may serve their generation according to the will of God, though time will not allow them to be specified at present.

The House of Gaius was the scene of Christian espousals. In it Mercy was married to Matthew, and the host's daughter Phœbe to Matthew's brother James. The account of this double wedding is clearly intended to illustrate the propriety of Christians marrying in the Lord. Something has been said on this subject in a former discourse, and no more need now be said than that it must be clear to all who give it due consideration that the marriage of those who love Christ is an infinitely more blessed and hallowed union than that of others. If the wife or husband only is a Christian, there must be a want of that sympathy which finds its sphere in the fellowship of those who love the Saviour better than each other, and expect to spend eternity together in His blessed presence.

IV.

The House of Mnason is the last of these emblems of the Church. The description of its master is borrowed from Acts **xxi. 16**, which describes Mnason as a native of Cyprus, an old disciple, and the owner of a house in Jerusalem where Paul and his companions expected to lodge. The account of this house closely resembles that of the house of Gaius. In this as in that the pilgrims were suitably refreshed. This like that was enlivened by profitable conversation, Mnason's friends, Messrs. Holy-man, Love-saint, Dare-not-lie, and Penitent, being assembled to take part in it. This like that was a centre of Christian usefulness, its inmates going forth to attack the monster Antichrist with such success that they wounded and put him to flight. This like that was the scene of Christian espousals, Samuel and Joseph, the younger sons of Christiana, being

here wedded to Grace and Martha, the daughters of Mnason.

It was not an inn, however, but a private house, situated in the great town of Vanity Fair. Many a Christian Church has had no better place of assembly than a house of this kind. A building expressly erected for the accommodation of a congregation of worshippers may be more convenient, but cannot be more sacred, than such a house. The minsters which men rear in great cities may be more spacious, more stately, more beautiful, more lasting than a house like that of Mnason, but they cannot be more holy. The building, whether large or small, plain or splendid, a private dwelling or a public place of assembly, may be consecrated by the presence and procedure of those who worship in it, but cannot impart sanctity to them. The true house of God is not the structure composed of lifeless stones or other materials, but that which

is composed of the living stones which are sometimes associated with it. The term "Church" is primarily applicable to the Christian assembly, and secondarily to the house in which that assembly gathers. This is obvious enough, and yet there is grave reason for insisting upon its truth and importance in these days, as there was such reason for so doing in days gone by.

Mnason's guests were not so badly treated in Vanity Fair as Christian and Faithful had been. Their victory over Antichrist, and the practical benevolence of the four young matrons who belonged to their society, were sufficiently appreciated to obtain for them a measure of good-will. The world is not always unwilling to acknowledge its obligations to the people of God. Under certain circumstances it is ready to recognise their moral heroism, their gracious charity, and the public advantages which result from the exercise of these virtues. It is fair to

acknowledge this ; but it is wise to bear in mind also that the world's applause may at any time be changed into savage censurè, and its smile into the frown which has too frequently menaced with no vain fury the people of God. If our own experience in *Vanity Fair* is more like that of *Christiana* than that of *Christian*, let us be thankful that "the lines are fallen to us in pleasant places," but let us not be lulled into anything like false security by this circumstance. Until such time as we are called from the Church on earth to the Church in heaven there is need of the utmost vigilance on our part, and it werè fatal folly to allow the friendship of the world to make us unfaithful to that Friend by whose grace alone we can expect to experience that blessed change.

Of the Church in heaven there has been no previous mention in this discourse, for there is but little said of it in *Bunyan's* book. When the gates of the *Celestial City* were flung open

for the admission of some of the pilgrims who had completed their course, the Dreamer caught such a glimpse of its glory as made him long to enter it like them. He knew that its inhabitants are perfectly safe and holy and happy, and that they are destined to remain so for ever. We know that the Church on earth and the Church in heaven are two sections of one society; that the Church in heaven will gradually absorb the Church on earth, and that "the whole family" will be gathered together in the Father's house and the Father's presence to share the blessings purchased and provided for their enjoyment and advantage world without end.


THE PILGRIMS AND THE BIBLE.

X.

THE PILGRIMS AND THE BIBLE.

"Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."

—*Psa. cxix. 54.*

HE pilgrimage of the Psalmist was that journey from the City of Destruction to the City Celestial which is undertaken by every subject of Divine grace. The house of that pilgrimage was that tabernacle which Paul afterwards spoke of as the earthly house of the believer, and contrasted with his house in the heavens. The house of the Christian's pilgrimage is the body in which his spirit is now lodged. He who spends his days in one place may reside in a substantial house of brick or stone; but the pilgrim, who needs to move his house from place to place, must needs be content with a

tabernacle. The statutes to which the Psalmist refers are the laws of God; and the assertion that those statutes had been his songs is partly explained by the circumstance that laws were anciently published in verse that they might be the more readily remembered. His meaning clearly is, however, that the Word of God had afforded him occasion of rejoicing during his journey through the world. Other pilgrims have more or less reason to adopt his language on the subject. They may well rejoice in the advantages they derive from the Word of God, and may well express their delight and gratitude in songs of praise. The Bible is a means of instruction, of stimulus, of victory, and of refreshment to them; and Bunyan's Allegory abundantly illustrates its value in these respects. It affords them instruction in righteousness. It incites them to make progress in the way of life. It enables them to overcome their spiritual enemies. It imparts all needful re-

freshment from time to time. There is not one of them who has not some reason to say to the Most High, "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."

I.

The pilgrims had reason to rejoice on account of the INSTRUCTION they derived from the Word of God. It is described in Bunyan's account of them as a book, a map, a light, and a glass; and these expressions are all suggestive of its value as a means of communicating spiritual instruction. They all alike remind us that "the holy scriptures are able to make men wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."


I. The Bible is first spoken of in the Pilgrim's Progress simply as a *Book*. Mention is made of a book which Christian (whose name was Graceless, however, at that time) was constantly reading while yet an inhabitant of the

City of Destruction. This Book revealed to him the coming doom of that city, and produced a powerful impression on his mind. Believing what he read, he became anxious to escape from the death to which he and his neighbours were condemned. He wept and trembled and uttered lamentable cries. His demeanour and the account he gave of it excited the anger, the scorn, and the commiseration of the various persons about him. They tried in vain to pacify him, and he fled from the devoted city as Lot fled from Sodom. Now the Book which poor Christian read with this result is one with which you are more or less familiar : but has it produced a corresponding result in your case ? Have you fled from the wrath to come ? If not, your condition before God is more deplorable than that of those who have never seen a Bible, and you are provoking a heavier retribution than they are threatened with. Suffer the word of exhortation. Linger not, I beseech you.

Away with you! Haste! Look not behind! Listen to no remonstrance! Turn a deaf ear to those who call after you! Run while you may! Escape while you can! Time is passing. Life is passing. Once more, away!

2. The Bible is also spoken of in the Allegory under the figure of a *Map*. The pilgrims described in the second part experienced some uncertainty at one time as to their proper course. But this uncertainty was soon removed. A map was produced; and having consulted it, they found that the road they would have been likely to take terminated in a deep and foul pit, and gladly turned to the right-hand way, which was the way of safety. Now many valuable maps have been published for the use of mankind. There are maps of our own country, of other countries, and of the world. We are apt at certain times to look with deep interest on the maps of those distant regions which we are never likely to visit. But

suppose that you were urged to betake yourselves to one of those regions, on the ground that, while you would there find a happier home than has ever yet fallen to your lot, you would assuredly be ruined by remaining here : would you not, under such circumstances, regard with special interest any map exhibiting the proposed country of your adoption and the road leading thither ? Of course you would. Well : the Bible is a map which shows the course that men must take in order to reach that Celestial City where alone they can attain to perfect prosperity. There are times when it is not easy for the Christian to know which is the path of duty ; and were he to exercise his own judgment in the matter, he would probably go astray. But he need not rely on his own fallible judgment at such times. He has access to the Word of God : let him consult his map. He may rely upon the information it affords, and will be wise in pursuing the course it indicates.




3. The Bible is spoken of in the Allegory as a *Light*. The Psalmist says in another part of this very psalm, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Christian found it such when he fled from his native city. He had been directed to the Wicket Gate; but inasmuch as he was unable to see that gate, was counselled to keep a certain light (which he did see) in view while he ran, and so he did. That light was a beacon which indicated the whereabouts of the Wicket Gate; and similarly the Bible enables those who earnestly seek Him to find the Saviour. Christiana and her companions are represented as needing this light of truth. While wending their way across the Enchanted Ground a great mist fell upon them, so that they walked not by sight. But there was a lantern among them, and a light was struck, and the danger of the darkness was thus diminished. This world is not only enchanted ground to the pilgrims who pass through it, but

also a land of darkness. Its darkness renders it a dangerous place for the children of light. But God's people are not left to grope in the gloom of spiritual ignorance without the means of finding their way. A lamp is provided for their use, and by the light which streams from it they are enabled to avoid those errors which end in destruction. Thank God for the Bible ! is an exclamation which has escaped many lips, and may well be familiar to our own. God is light, and His Word is luminous with precious revelations of His character and will. Those revelations are replete with instruction concerning the things which it is of the highest importance for us to understand while here below.

4. The Bible is spoken of in Bunyan's book as a *Glass*. At one of the resting-places provided for pilgrims Mercy saw a looking-glass in the dining-room which she greatly coveted. She was not to blame in this, for the object of her desire was the Word of God, and we are


told in its own pages to covet earnestly the best gifts. When those who had this mirror in their care were made aware of Mercy's feelings in relation to it, they cheerfully presented it to her. It was a most marvellous glass and most precious gift. When handled in one way it reflected the form of the person who looked into it ; but when handled in another way it reflected the form of our Lord. This description is plainly founded on several passages of Scripture. One of these is 1 Cor. xiii. 12, another 2 Cor. iii. 18, and another Jas. i. 23. A comparison of these passages suggests the remark that God's Word not only shows those who consult it what kind of persons they really are, but also what manner of persons they ought to be. It is a mirror which reflects their Master as well as themselves. They ought to resemble Him, but they are made aware by this means of their deficiency in this respect. In proportion as they obtain an adequate idea of Him do they

obtain also such an idea of themselves. They see the contrast between His moral beauty and their own deformity, and the more they admire the one must they loathe the other. They will see nothing reflected by this mirror more worthy of regard than the person of Christ, and those who have skill in handling it may obtain various views of Him. They may see Him living or dead, on earth or in heaven, humiliated or exalted, coming to suffer or coming to reign. Some of the time which is spent by many persons before other mirrors might be spent far more profitably before the one of which I speak. Those who gaze into this glass not only learn to cherish a lowly estimate of themselves and an exalted one of their Divine Lord, but they gradually become like Him. This is the teaching of the Apostle Paul in the second of those passages to which reference has been made, and therefore every pilgrim may well desire to obtain, as Mercy did, this priceless treasure.



Those who had charge of the mirror thus obtained by Mercy had charge also of another glass which likewise denoted the Word of God. This was that perspective glass through which the pilgrims looked from the summit of one of the Delectable Mountains called Clear. When pointed towards the Celestial City it revealed to those who had skill to use it aright the beauties and attractions of that blessed place. The view which Christian and Hopeful obtained, however, was not altogether satisfactory. They thought they saw something like its gate and some of its glory, but could not hold it with sufficient steadiness to see what would otherwise have filled them with delight. Their hands trembled because their hearts were just then troubled with misgivings as to whether they were really destined to reach the place they sought to see. They exhibited what is described in the margin as the fruits of servile fear. But pilgrims were not always thus un-

fortunate. Among ourselves are some who have been enabled to employ the perspective glass with great success. Ascending Mount Clear—rising in spirit, *i.e.*, above the distracting influences of the present world—they have read the revelation of Holy Scripture relative to the world to come with such faith in the truth of those revelations, with such an appreciation of their preciousness, and with such an assured sense of personal interest in them, that their souls were thrilled with rapture and fired with an unquenchable determination to press onward to the portals of the City of God, notwithstanding every impediment and discouragement they might encounter in the way. All that any of us can know of the future and unseen is what the Bible teaches on the subject, but to read the Bible without faith is useless. Only as the reader is able to realise its revelations can his character and conduct be influenced by them. But in proportion as



he does realise the truth that a place is prepared for himself in the heaven it describes will he experience an exultant joy. No glass through which the inquisitive man of science gazes patiently at the wonders of nature can discover such splendours and fascinations as those revealed to pilgrims who employ with requisite skill the perspective glass to which every one of us has access.

II.

The pilgrims had reason to rejoice on account of the *STIMULUS* they received from the Word of God. All Christians, know by experience that they need to be stimulated to make progress in the way of life from time to time. There are alternations of ardour and coldness, of zeal and indifference, of energy and lethargy, of wakefulness and somnolency on their part. There are seasons, therefore, when they require to be aroused from stupor, and urged to dili-

gence by the Word of God, and they are thus influenced by it in various ways.

1. The Bible incites pilgrims to make needful progress by its *invitations*. Before Christiana left the City of Destruction, and while she was thinking seriously of doing so, she received a visit from one named Secret, who told her that his dwelling was on high, and that he had brought her a letter from the King who reigned in the Celestial City. It was a letter of invitation to make her home in that city; and the messenger advised her to put it in her bosom, that she might have it at hand, and be able to read it to herself and her children until they became familiar with its contents. He added that it was one of the songs which she would have to sing in the house of her pilgrimage, and that she would have to deliver it at the farther gate. Now every true Christian has received such a letter. God's people have not only read and heard the invitations con-

tained in His word with such frequency as to have become familiar with the terms in which they are expressed: these invitations have been so urged on their acceptance that they have undertaken the pilgrimage to the Celestial City. The invitations which others merely receive are accepted by them. The invitations which others only read or hear are invested in their case with a fascinating influence by the secret agency of the Holy Spirit. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." The invitations He addresses to them are treasured up in their hearts, and the result is that they not only set out in the right way, in spite of all opposition, but are stimulated to press forward as often as necessary by the hopes excited by those invitations.

2. The Bible incites pilgrims to make needful progress by its *promises*. There are two passages in the Allegory which claim attention here, both of them being intended to show that

when our spiritual progress is checked by anything akin to despair — by doubt or diffidence or despondency — the Divine promises are adapted to dissipate the feeling which thus prevents our progress.

One of these passages relates to Christian's experience in the Slough of Despond. Why was that experience so disastrous? There was no necessity for its being so. There were other pilgrims who passed safely across the Slough. Faithful did so, *e. g.*, and so did Christiana and her companions. The matter is easily explained. There were certain steps which extended right across the Slough, and afforded firm footing for those who desired to go on pilgrimage. These steps Christian did not observe, however, and it was this heedlessness which occasioned him to fall into the Slough; whereas those pilgrims who observed the steps, and took care to plant their feet on them as they walked, got safely over. Now the steps

thus described are God's promises, and he who walks by faith in the Divine promises will never fall into that despondent condition relative to spiritual things which has proved so disastrous to many.

The other passage relates to the experience of Christian and Hopeful in Doubting Castle. The dungeons of this gloomy stronghold were dangerous places to become acquainted with, and they knew not how to effect their escape. But on the Sunday morning an idea flashed across Christian's mind just before dawn, and he exclaimed, "What a fool I am thus to lie in a stinking dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty! I have a key in my bosom, called Promise, that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle." This was good news to Hopeful, who at once encouraged his companion to make trial of his key. So at it he went, and was not disappointed. One after the other all the doors which intervened be-

tween their dungeon and the outer world were opened, and they both escaped. The outmost gate did indeed creak so horribly as to arouse Giant Despair, who promptly pursued his prisoners. But the Giant was subject to fits, and one of his fits coming on just then, they were able to get clean away. The Key of Promise has been entrusted to every Christian, and is adapted to remove all doubt, and will assuredly deliver the pilgrim who plucks it forth from his bosom and employs it aright from the power of despair. When our spirits are depressed and discouraged by doubt, so that we are deterred from making that progress in spiritual things which is always desirable, let us then bethink ourselves of those exceeding great and precious promises which have reanimated so many of God's people in former times, and may well reanimate ourselves.

3. The Bible incites pilgrims to make progress by its *warnings*. These warnings are

sometimes conveyed in the story of some person who sinned and suffered in ancient times. One such story is that of Lot's wife. She had been assured that the city in which she had been dwelling with her husband and family was about to be destroyed. She had been directed to accompany them to a place of safety. She had been forbidden to look back upon her doomed dwelling. But she disobeyed, and was promptly punished. It is said that she became a pillar of salt. The story of this woman is recorded in the Book of Genesis in order to warn those who have left the City of Destruction and are on their way to the Celestial City from looking back in a spiritual sense. The Lord Jesus Christ enforced one of the solemn warnings He addressed to men by a reference to it. Having all this in mind, Bunyan mentions a monument in his book, which stood hard by the highway-side, and looked like the figure of a woman that had

been turned to stone. The pilgrims who approached this monument espied an inscription upon it which proved to be a record of the Saviour's words, "Remember Lot's wife!" There are many other warnings addressed by the Word of God to those pilgrims who are tempted to loiter in the way of life. Such warnings are sadly needed, and it is probable that some of us may need them now. Take heed to them, I beseech you, for you will neglect them at your peril.

4. The Bible incites pilgrims to make progress by its *examples*. It not only tells us of those who sinned and suffered the penalty of their transgressions, but of those who were illustrious for their devotion to the Divine will and distinguished by the Divine favour. Accordingly, the pilgrims are represented in the Allegory as conversing of those ancient worthies and deriving encouragement from their example. Abraham and David, Peter and Stephen, were

thus spoken of at different times; and there can be no doubt that it is highly profitable for us to reflect on the example set by such men. They were men of like passions with ourselves, and owed the excellence they displayed to the grace of God. That grace can do for us what it did for them, and enable us to emulate their patience and perseverance in the right way. Now what prevents us from making proper progress in that way? Is it sloth? In that case the Bible calls attention to those who displayed diligence in the Divine service in former times, and exhorts us to "be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Is it the apparent impossibility of any farther progress on our part? In that case the Bible reminds us of words once spoken by its Divine Author when the march of His ancient people was checked by the Red Sea. "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." This

direction was obeyed, and the chosen people soon found themselves safe on the other side. Is it danger or difficulty of any kind which daunts us? In that case the Bible refers us to "Gideon and Barak, and Samson and Jephthah, to David also, and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

III.

The pilgrims had reason to rejoice on account of the VICTORIES they obtained by means of the Bible. We are told by an apostle that the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, and this truth is largely illustrated in Bunyan's book.

It was by means of the sword he received

in the House Beautiful that Christian obtained his victory over Apollyon. There was a time in the course of his conflict with that foul fiend when it seemed likely that he would himself be overcome. While Apollyon wrestled with him his sword flew out of his hand. "I am sure of thee now!" exclaimed the enemy; but happily Christian recovered his weapon, and the fiend fled. What are we to understand by this account of Christian's sword flying out of his hand? I reply that there are times in the experience of some of God's saints when they think the Bible is against them. There were such times in Bunyan's own experience, so that he supposed he was discouraged by certain passages of Scripture from hoping in the Divine mercy. When a Christian has such an idea the sword has flown out of his hand, and his enemy has him at great advantage. It is most consolatory, however, to know that God will not allow any of His people to perish by the

power of the Prince of Darkness. They are sure to recover the weapon they have lost, and to come off more than conquerors through Him who loves them.

It was by means of this sword also that the champions we read of in the second part of the Allegory beat off their formidable assailants. Even giants were vanquished by those who wielded it. Mr. Valiant-for-Truth in the moment of victory might well extol that "right Jerusalem blade" to which he attributed it. "Let a man have one of these blades," said he, "with a hand to wield it and skill to use it, and he may venture upon an angel with it." We are assured, however, on higher authority than this, that "the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow."

It was by means of this sword that all those spiritual heroes whose prowess has rendered

their names illustrious achieved their triumphs. Patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, wielded it with signal effect. The Captain of Salvation Himself employed it in preference to any other weapon when repelling the onslaught of Satan in the wilderness. That onslaught was thrice beaten back with a passage of Holy Writ. "It is written! It is written! It is written!"

If we are to be good soldiers of that Divine Captain in whose steps we profess to tread, we must acquire skill in wielding this redoubtable weapon. Those who triumph by its means may well rejoice. The chieftain who conquers in a conflict which engages the attention of mankind has doubtless some reason for exultation; and we need not wonder if those who sympathise with him cause the bells to ring, the banners to be displayed, the cannon to thunder forth their salutations, and the streets to blaze with unwonted splendour. But after all there

is less reason for rejoicing in his triumph than in that of the spiritual hero who has vanquished vice and trodden down evil customs and driven demons from their strongholds in the name of God. Be sure the psalmist was thinking partly of the victories he had obtained by means of the Word of God when he exclaimed, "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."

IV.

The pilgrims had reason to rejoice on account of the refreshment they obtained from the Word of God. You remember Bunyan's description of the River of God, of the trees which grew on its banks, and of the meadows through which it ran. This description is borrowed from several passages of Scripture, and principally from what is said in the twenty-third Psalm and in the twenty-second chapter of Revelation. The living water of the river denotes the Holy

Spirit, but the channel in which it flows denotes the Word of God. This river was a source of varied refreshment to the pilgrims. They drank of its water: the fruit of the trees which flourished on its banks was food to them: the leaves of those trees were their medicine. The meadow served them as a place of repose. Thus the Word of God is represented as affording food and medicine and rest and pleasure to His people during their pilgrimage through the world.

Spiritual *food* is necessary to the prosperity of God's people. "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The people of God in ancient times were provided with food in the wilderness, which for want of a better name they called manna; but other travellers in that wilderness found no such provision made for them. Similarly those pilgrims who constitute the true Israel are supplied with

spiritual food of which other human beings have no experience. They eat of the Hidden Manna, and pluck fruit from the Tree of Life. Hence their growth in grace, the renewal of their strength, their ability to remove mountains, and their prowess in presence of their foes.

Spiritual *medicine* is necessary to the prosperity of God's people. Many are sick among them. Has there not been reason ere now to say respecting each of us, "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick"? Has not the prophet's question a deep and permanent significance, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" But the reply to this question is most cheering. The leaves of the Tree of Life are for the healing of the nations. The Christian can say to his own sin-sick spirit, in grateful praise of his Divine Master, "He healeth all thy diseases." Disease

only lingers where the Word of God is despised.

Spiritual *rest* is necessary for the prosperity of God's people; and every true pilgrim may sometimes say, "He leadeth me beside the waters of rest." That repose of spirit which is peculiar to Christians is an earnest of the everlasting rest which remaineth for them. Gratefully may each believer sing—

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'Come unto Me and rest ;
Lay down, poor weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My breast.'

"I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad ;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad."

Spiritual *pleasure* is necessary to the prosperity of God's people. Such pleasure is possible. Their experience is by no means altogether sad. Their Master was a man of sorrows, and yet He rejoiced in spirit. It was the will of God, revealed to Him, which occasioned His re-

joicing. It is the Word of God, which reveals His will to them, that occasions them also to rejoice with a joy which no man can take away. The man who believes that the gospel is not only true, but addressed to himself, is certain to experience unspeakable gratification. It assures him of endless life, of perfect happiness, of an honourable position in the universe, of admission to the best society, and of a home in the presence of God. It describes the sufferings incident to the present time as a necessary preparation for the glory of the future. It proclaims the pardon of his sins, announces his adoption into the Divine family, mentions a goodly inheritance which is reserved for him in heaven, and calls upon him to rejoice in the Lord alway with such spirit-stirring power, that he has frequent occasion to exclaim with grateful emotion, "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage!"


THE PILGRIMS AND THEIR PASTORS.



XI.

THE PILGRIMS AND THEIR PASTORS.

"I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding."—*Jer.* iii. 15.

 HIS promise has been abundantly fulfilled under the gospel dispensation. From the time of the apostles there have been many such pastors; not a few of them being remarkable for gifts and graces which procured them a renown as wide and lasting as that of any members of the race to which we belong. Among them John Bunyan was not the least distinguished, and it is interesting to find in his "Pilgrim's Progress" those representations of Christian pastors to which your attention is now invited. There has already been occasion to refer to that picture of such a pastor which

the pilgrims saw in the House of the Interpreter, and it will be found that the account of that picture agrees with that of the various persons described in the Allegory as types of the Christian ministry. Two of these are simply represented as Teachers or Preachers of the truth. A third is described as a Porter, a fourth as a Physician, and a fifth as a Guide. The remaining four are called Shepherds.

I.

The two Teachers were called respectively Evangelist and Tell-true, and a few words may be said about each of them.

I. Evangelist is a very appropriate name for a Christian minister, the word meaning a messenger of good ; and assuredly the man who preaches the gospel is the bearer of a blessed message to his fellow-men.

Christian was first addressed by Evangelist while he was considering how he might escape

from the City of Destruction. He was not only urged by him to flee from the wrath to come, but was shown the way of escape. The ministers of Christ are constantly showing their hearers the importance of seeking deliverance from the doom that hangs over them, and how such deliverance should be sought. They announce that men's great need is salvation, and that Christ is the only but all-sufficient Saviour. This second part of their ministry is sometimes the more difficult to perform with success. It is comparatively easy to arouse the apprehensions of men in relation to the future and unseen. It is not generally so easy to show how those apprehensions may be allayed in the only effectual manner. Nevertheless this has been done in numberless instances. The words of the minister are driven home by the Spirit of the Master, and sinners are enabled to lay hold of the great salvation.

The second time that Christian was addressed

by Evangelist was when he stood trembling in the shadow of Mount Sinai. He had reason to tremble, for he had no sort of business there, and there was no more dangerous place to be found. He was ashamed as well as afraid when he saw Evangelist approaching, but was soon reassured by that faithful friend, by whom he was once more put in the right way, so that he presently arrived at the Wicket Gate. Those who preach the gospel often meet with men who act as Christian did. They say that Christ is the only Saviour, and invite their hearers to accept and acknowledge Him as such. Those hearers appear to assent; but when they are pressed to take their place among the professed people of Christ, they demur. It transpires that they are still strangers to the peace of God, and occupied with vain endeavours to obtain peace by self-amendment. They say that they are not good enough at present to assume the Christian

name, as though Christ had not distinctly said that He came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. Instead of going as directed to the Wicket Gate, they have gone to Mount Sinai ; and hence there is no peace for them till they are persuaded to abandon all hope of attaining to a righteousness of their own, and to rely entirely on the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ.

The third time that Christian was addressed by Evangelist was in the neighbourhood of Vanity Fair. Faithful had then become his companion ; and Faithful, like himself, had been induced to become a pilgrim by Evangelist. They were equally pleased therefore to see the good man ; and he, having obtained an account from them of their recent experience, proceeded to warn them of the dangers they would encounter in Vanity Fair, assuring them, however, that they could experience no real damage while they remained faithful. They were thus

prepared for the evils which befell them in the Fair; and this reminds us that it is one part of a pastor's duty to teach his people to count the cost of being Christians and encourage them to pay the price exacted. He has to call attention not only to those words of Christ, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me," but also to those words of the apostle, "Who is he that shall harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?"

2. Mr. Tell-true's ministry is described in the second part of the Allegory. It was exercised in Dark Land, which is said to lie in the same coast as the City of Destruction, and is therefore another name for this present evil world. It was instrumental in the conversion of Mr. Valiant-for-Truth; the name of the preacher and the name of the convert alike suggesting that the message of Christian ministers is emphatically true. "This is a

faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." The gospel is a faithful saying. The Evangelist tells the truth. Whatever may be false, the announcement of salvation through Jesus Christ is true. If you ask for evidence of its truth, I reply that there is ample evidence of various kinds. Those who seek it may find evidence historical and practical, internal and external, subjective and objective, which it is, of course, impossible to exhibit here and now. I suppose, however, that most of you admit the truth of that announcement of Divine grace with which you are familiar, and therefore need only say that you will be without excuse if you fail to regulate your lives thereby. Be valiant for truth, and the truth shall make you free, shall make you strong, shall make you pure, shall make you rich, and shall make you glad. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

II.

The first and second parts of the Allegory make mention of a PORTER as stationed at the entrance of the House Beautiful. This porter was a very friendly personage, and is represented as making pilgrims welcome to the palace on their approach, and as invoking a blessing upon them on their departure. But he took pains to assure himself that they were pilgrims indeed. The palace had been built for the use of such persons; and he would not therefore introduce those who presented themselves at its gate to a place within its walls until he had obtained satisfactory replies to his questions as to who they were, whence they came, whither they went, and why they had become the pilgrims they professed to be. It is the province of a spiritual pastor to behave in some such way towards those who seek, or ought to seek, admission to the visible Church. It behoves him to look out

for all who should be encouraged to enter the Church, and also to see that those who do seek admission to it are such as make a credible profession of their faith in Jesus Christ. This representation of the Christian ministry was partly suggested by two passages of Scripture. "I had rather," says the Psalmist, "be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness." The Saviour likened Himself to "a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch." It has been very commonly assumed by expositors that the porter mentioned in this parable denotes the Christian ministry; and that this was Bunyan's idea is apparent from his calling the Porter of the Palace Beautiful, Watchful, of which name as applicable to an ideal pastor something will be said presently. There are those in the pre-

sent day who might study the account of this porter with advantage, and the more the Christian ministry is reinforced by men like Mr. Watchful, the better.

III.

The PHYSICIAN mentioned in the Allegory was called Mr. Skill, and very skilful he approved himself when there was occasion for his services. The account of his patient and his prescription is so very homely, that to repeat Bunyan's own language on the subject would be to make you laugh. It is very instructive, nevertheless, and some reference may here be made to it as affording a valuable lesson to those who are concerned that Christian ministers should know how to deal with a mind diseased.

Mr. Skill's *patient* was Christiana's eldest son Matthew. The disease which afflicted him was a very painful one, and the physician was not long in ascertaining its nature.

Matthew was troubled with a disturbed conscience, than which nothing can be more distressing to its subject. This disease was occasioned by his having eaten some forbidden fruit. Soon after he and his companions had got through the Wicket Gate he was attracted by certain clusters of this fruit which hung over the wall of Beelzebub's orchard. He plucked and ate, and this was the result. The world is full of forbidden fruit, and the devil is constantly placing it in the way of young Christians and others. But they pluck it at their peril. They cannot eat it with impunity. It may be pleasant to the taste, but it will afterwards produce a pain which amounts to agony. There is need to say to those who lust after this fruit, "Be sure your sin will find you out." Since our first parents plucked the prohibited produce of the Tree of Knowledge in Paradise not one of their progeny has imitated their example and re-

mained unpunished. There may be some delay. There was in Matthew's case. It was not until he had become an inmate of the House Beautiful that he was found to be in danger of death in consequence of his folly. Bunyan knew that the effect of Church-fellowship is frequently to make the conscience tender respecting sins that were committed before such fellowship was attained. Have not some of us an experimental knowledge of the same thing?

Mr. Skill's *prescription* is worthy of regard on several accounts. The potion prescribed was made *ex carne et sanguine Christi, i. e.*, out of the flesh and blood of Christ. "You know," says the Allegorist, "that physicians give strange medicines to their patients." (We know that they affect to write their prescriptions in Latin, and we do not fail to notice the humour and verisimilitude of this narrative.) This potion "was made up into pills,

with a promise or two, and a proportionable quantity of salt;" the meaning of which is that the gospel is the remedy for a disturbed conscience. We ought to know this, for we often sing—

"This remedy did Wisdom find
To heal diseases of the mind;
This sovereign balm, whose virtues can
Restore the ruined creature, man."

The medicine thus prescribed by Mr. Skill is of unequalled efficacy. He did not administer it till the virtue of another potion had been tested and found wanting. This was composed of the blood of a goat, the ashes of an heifer, and the juice of hyssop; but though a good medicine in its way, it was too weak for Matthew's case. The allusion is, of course, to that exultant question of the sacred writer: "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ,

who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God ? ” The outward ordinances of religion are useful to those who properly attend to them, but they can never appease the conscience. That can only be pacified by being purified, and can only be purified by the Saviour’s blood. The potion prescribed by Matthew’s physician was to be taken fasting in a measure of the tears of repentance. Otherwise it would have been useless. Without an exercise of self-denial and penitence on the part of those who hear the gospel, it must fail to give them peace. Those who remain self-indulgent and impenitent will assuredly remain also spiritually sick. The medicine prescribed by Mr. Skill was pronounced quite palatable by him and the patient’s mother, and yet they had to employ much persuasion to induce poor Matthew to take it. The truth thus taught is that the

gospel is apt to appear loathsome to a sin-sick soul. Its doctrine is so humbling, and humiliation is so unpleasant an experience to anticipate, that we need not wonder at this. But those who take the physic—those who allow the truth to have its legitimate effect with them—find that the humiliation thus produced is as pleasant as it is beneficial. We must not fail to observe that the good physician pronounced the medicine he prescribed to be a remedy for all the diseases to which pilgrims are exposed, to be efficacious in the prevention of those diseases as well as their cure, and to be even able to render those who use it aright immortal. Matthew had no reason to doubt his physician's word, for he was presently restored to health by his instrumentality. We know that the language attributed to Mr. Skill is agreeable to that which is contained in the Word of God, and there is reason for rejoicing that so many

resemble that good physician in recommending the only remedy which can make the subject of moral disease completely whole.

IV.

The Guide we read of in Bunyan's book enables us to understand what manner of men the ministers of religion should be, and what manner of work they should do. His name was Great-heart, which signifies that a certain magnanimity should characterise those who sustain the sacred office. This magnanimity rendered him the guardian as well as the guide of the pilgrims placed under his care. He was a servant of the Interpreter, and understood that his duty could not be discharged unless he approved himself the champion as well as the leader of those pilgrims. The pastors employed by the Holy Spirit in the Church of Christ would not be able to lead their people aright were they to refuse the conflict to which

they are challenged by the enemies of their Lord.

Mr. Great-heart's example was of very great value to the pilgrims. His teaching was not merely oral, but practical. He not only delivered excellent discourses, but enforced the doctrine thus conveyed by his own conduct. He was not like the finger-post which points out the right way without taking a step in that direction. He did not simply say, "Here is the Hill Difficulty, and you must make your way to the top of it;" but went up the hill with them. Down into the Valley of Humiliation, through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, through the streets of Vanity Fair, across the Enchanted Ground, and along the whole of the way to the River of Death, did this faithful guide of the pilgrims go. This was as it should be, and as (thank God!) it often is. But it may not be denied that many professed pastors fail to

practice what they preach to a most deplorable extent. The mischief thus occasioned is unspeakable. The effect produced is worse than when a private member of the visible Church acts an unworthy part. But the inconsistent life of one set apart to the Christian ministry does not supply others with the excuse they are so ready to plead for their own shortcomings. Other pastors may fail to set a good example before their fellow-men, but the Chief Shepherd has set a perfect example, and His sheep will follow Him.

Mr. Great-heart's prowess was very serviceable to the pilgrims. It repeatedly happened that some formidable enemy was discovered near them. Sometimes the Guide was attacked, and at other times the conflict was provoked by him. Giants and other monsters were the foes he had to encounter, but his great heart was never dismayed, and he so handled his weapons as to obtain

the victory in every case. It is evident that Bunyan had no idea that Christian charity requires a Christian minister to refrain from attacking the errors and evils which abound in the world. Falsehood, tyranny, and unbelief in all their forms must be resisted or assailed with the sword of the Spirit. Many large-hearted ministers of Christ have thus judged, and these men have made the powers of earth and hell tremble before them. Their voices roused the nations while they lived, their writings are still formidable to their Master's foes, and the record of their unselfish heroism appeals with power to the consciences of many. The prowess they displayed did not prevent them from also displaying a tenderness and patience and gentleness towards those placed under their care which would seem to be peculiar to such as they. Mr. Great-heart was the loving friend of the women and children and weak persons

he was commissioned to guide in the way of life. The demeanour of this man was as kind to them as it was stern towards their spiritual foes.

V.

It remains to observe what is said in the Allegory about the FOUR SHEPHERDS who entertained the pilgrims in obedience to their Master's will. It is said that the sheep under their care belonged to Emmanuel, who laid down His life for them. We know that Christ's ministers are frequently spoken of in His Word as the shepherds, or pastors, to whose care His sheep, or disciples, are entrusted. The work of Christian ministers and the qualities which should distinguish them are set forth in the account of these Four Shepherds.

1. The *work* to which spiritual pastors are called is largely illustrated by the account of the place where they tended their

sheep. This was called Emmanuel's Land, and there were the Delectable Mountains, which could be seen from the roof of the House Beautiful. There was another such palace on these mountains: there were also orchards and vineyards and fountains of water, expressly provided for the Saviour's sheep, and for those who went on pilgrimage to the Celestial City. They might well, therefore, be called delectable, but our present business is not so much to contemplate the pleasure experienced there by the pilgrims as the useful lessons they received from the Shepherds. They were shown a series of views by them from the various mountains on which the sheep were feeding. One of these views illustrated the danger of false doctrine; the pilgrims looking from the top of a hill called Error at the mangled bodies of men who had fallen thence. Another view illustrated the inspired saying, "The man

that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead;" the pilgrims gazing from the Hill Caution at certain blind men whose eyes had been put out by Giant Despair, and who stumbled hopelessly about a graveyard to which he had afterwards consigned them. A third view illustrated the folly of hypocrisy; the pilgrims having their attention directed to a place where those who had been guilty of this sin were confined, and whence they were heard to utter vain lamentations, regrets, and curses. Yet another view illustrated the triumph of innocence over prejudice and ill-will; the pilgrims observing a man with white raiment, at whom two other men were throwing dirt, without being able to permanently soil his garments. There were other views which illustrated respectively the power of faith, the blessedness of charity, the folly of misrepresenting bad men

as good, and the actual existence of the Celestial City. The lessons thus taught are such as the pastors of God's people have occasion to teach from age to age. The Four Shepherds were very worthy representatives of the Christian ministry. The pilgrims might well remember them with gratitude. They received nothing but kindness from them while they remained at the Delectable Mountains; and "when they were about to depart, one of the Shepherds gave them a note of the way. Another of them bid them beware of the Flatterer. The third bid them take heed that they slept not upon the Enchanted Ground. And the fourth bid them God-speed."

2. The qualities which should distinguish the ministers of Christ are indicated by the names of these Four Shepherds. They were called respectively, Knowledge, Experience, Watchful, and Sincere.

The pastor should possess a goodly measure of knowledge. It is not indeed necessary that he should be a great scholar in the collegiate or university sense. The larger his stores of oriental, classical, patristic, scientific, and general knowledge, the better; but it is not of such knowledge I speak. Many doctors and divines of Bunyan's time far excelled him in this respect, but perhaps not one of them really excelled him in that knowledge of the Divine will which rendered him so useful in the service of Christ. There are truths which are hidden from the wise and prudent, but revealed to babes. He who searches the Scriptures under the direction of the Holy Spirit will become acquainted with those truths.

The pastor should possess experience of the Christian life. It is distinctly said in the Scriptures that a bishop (which is another name for a pastor) must not be a novice. This does not mean that he must be an old

man, for Paul said to Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth;" and Timothy was not only a pastor, but had to exercise supervision as to other pastors. It is possible for a young man to have more experience than an older one. It is possible for a young pastor to have considerable religious experience. He who has himself triumphed over temptation and vanquished doubt and tasted the sweets of familiar intercourse with God is the better able on that account to tend the sheep of Christ.

The pastor should be very vigilant in the exercise of his ministry. It is a significant circumstance that Bunyan gives the same name to two of the persons described in his book as denoting those who have the care of souls. Mr. Watchful the shepherd may be regarded as the brother of Mr. Watchful the porter. The Scriptures speak repeatedly of vigilance in connection with the spiritual pastors of God's people. To the prophet

Ezekiel it was said by the Lord himself, "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me." To the evangelist Timothy it was said by the Lord's apostle, "Watch thou in all things." The original readers of the Epistle to the Hebrews were thus addressed concerning their pastors: "They watch for your souls as they that must give account." Christian ministers are not the only persons who need to exercise spiritual vigilance. The words of the Master on this subject must not be forgotten: "What I say unto you I say unto all—watch." But still it is evident that pastors have special need of vigilance, and the people of a faithful pastor have reason to be thankful that he exercises this virtue in relation to them.

The pastor should be sincere. "Of course he should," perhaps some of you will say. I also say, Of course he should; but do you know what pastoral sincerity involves? It will expose

the good man who exhibits it to the dislike of some and the persecution of others. It will oblige him to sacrifice his own earthly interests. It will compel him to do violence to his own feelings. In public and in private he will say what he thinks ought to be said, who-soever may take offence. But then, on the other hand, he will keep in mind that he serves the God of truth, and that his principal business is to please Him. His people, too, if they are wise, will remember the saying, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." Alas for the congregation which recognises as its pastor a man who is not sincere! and alas, also, for the man who preaches for his own selfish purposes that which flatters or misleads the people entrusted to his care! Happily the promise has been amply fulfilled in our time as formerly: "I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding."



THE PILGRIMS AT PRAYER.



XII.

THE PILGRIMS AT PRAYER.

"Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."—*Matt.* vii. 7.



HIS passage was plainly very much in Bunyan's mind when he wrote the Pilgrim's Progress. It contains a precept and a promise, which are each expressed in a triple manner. Men are directed to pray, and assured that their prayers shall be answered. To ask, to seek, or to knock, in the sense here intended, is to pray. It shall be given you, ye shall find, it shall be opened unto you, are various forms of the same assurance, viz., that prayer shall be answered. The people of God in all ages have been addicted to prayer, and their prayers have been signally answered in numberless in-

stances. It was natural, therefore, that the Allegorist should represent the pilgrims he describes as praying successfully for the various blessings they desired. Be it ours to seek the same blessings in the same way! The words before us are addressed to us as truly as to others, — as truly as they were addressed to those who heard them pronounced by the Prince of pilgrims long ago.

I.

The pilgrims prayed successfully for PARDON. Christiana cried out for this blessing day and night while yet in the City of Destruction, and Mercy besought it of the Gate-keeper Good-will, who pronounced them both forgiven. The absolution they thus received was intended to illustrate the passage before us ; for written over the Wicket Gate itself were the words, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Their experience answered to that of all other appli-

cants for admission there. They might have to knock repeatedly in some instances, but sooner or later the gate was opened to them. It was opened to poor, burdened, ragged, mud-bespattered Christian. It was opened to his children. It was opened to Mr. Fearing, who was ashamed to show his face when fairly inside. It remained shut against none who acted on the direction inscribed upon it. Why then should not you thus act? What is it that prevents you from praying for the pardon you need? I assume that you acknowledge this need, and that you do not hope to obtain pardon without prayer. The difficulties which you experience in relation to this matter are probably not precisely the same in every instance. It may be useful to glance at some of them, and in view of your own spiritual necessities, to ask if they are indeed insuperable.

One man would pray but for the want of time for such an exercise. He rises early and

retires late to rest, and in the interval he is constantly occupied with matters connected with the present world. All the time which is not absorbed by sleep is devoted to the buying and selling, the correspondence and calculation, the manufacturing and travelling, which pertain to the business in which he is engaged. He devotes none of it to vicious pleasures, or to pursuits which are neither useful nor honourable. It is not necessary to know whether he is rich or poor, or whether the business to which he devotes his time is remunerative or the reverse. It is enough to know that he neglects prayer at his peril. No man can neglect with impunity the Divine rule which relates to the apportionment of our time. We are to have regard in the first instance to our spiritual concerns, and only afterwards to those of a temporal character. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." You

cannot fairly plead a want of time for prayer: you have time enough, however you may misappropriate it to other things.

Some cannot pray for pardon for want of the requisite privacy. They are almost never alone. They have scarcely any experience of solitude. They are unable to reckon upon a single hour out of the twenty-four in which they will be withdrawn entirely from the notice of those who are associated with them in various ways. They are incessantly under the eye of a parent or child, a husband or wife, a brother or sister, an employer or servant, or that of some other person. They are much in society. They are much abroad. If they were not so much observed, they would very gladly enter into their closet, and shut the door, and pray to Him that seeth in secret. They would not like, when missed by their associates, to have it said that they were at their devotions. They would even be ashamed to have it known by

those nearest and dearest to them that they were thus engaged. They could have the requisite privacy for prayer but for this sense of shame. This shame is their real difficulty, but the time will come when men will be ashamed of such shame, and bitterly regret that it was allowed to prevent them from seeking that pardon which every sinner so sorely needs.

There are those who are prevented from seeking this blessing by a certain spiritual indolence. They are not, perhaps, absolutely insensible to the importance of obtaining pardon. They are not too indolent to read the Bible, but are too indolent to do as it directs. They perceive that such prayer as the Word of God prescribes must involve a spiritual exertion from which they shrink. They know that such prayer is no mere repetition of any form of words ; but an earnest and persistent solicitation of the Divine mercy, attended with a realisation of their own otherwise wretched condi-

tion, such as is incompatible with a continued course of selfish indulgence on their part. They propose to address themselves to prayer of this kind at some future time. They procrastinate in relation to this matter notwithstanding the known peril of such procrastination. They may or may not be indolent respecting other things, but are chargeable with that indolence which is least excusable and most perilous, viz., that which keeps them from prayer.

Here and there may be found some who are prevented from seeking pardon by a metaphysical difficulty. They infer from the Bible account of prayer that it is impossible for them to pray. They find that true prayer—prayer which is acceptable and efficacious—is attributed to the prompting of the indwelling Spirit of God; and believing themselves to be destitute of His presence, conclude that they are without power to present a prayer to the only Being who can pardon them. But the word “power”

thus used can only mean disposition, and do you really say that you are destitute of a disposition to seek the Divine mercy? In presence of a passage like the text—a passage inspired by the Holy Spirit—will you really assert that you cannot pray? When He says, “Ask, and ye shall receive,” you dishonour Him by such an assertion. How are you to know that you can’t pray apart from experience? You can at least make the attempt. Don’t delude yourselves with the notion that the words before us are only addressed to certain members of our race to the exclusion of the rest. Compare them with those which follow, and you will see that such is not the case; “for every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” It is true that men cannot pray without the aid of the Holy Ghost. It is true that not only the answer to prayer, but prayer itself, must come from God. It is right that those who have

obtained Divine blessing by prayer should remember and acknowledge that they were enabled to pray by the Spirit of God. But to assume that He will not enable you to do the very thing which He Himself directs and encourages you to do, is not to honour Him, but the exact reverse.

It may encourage some who find it difficult to pray for pardon to remind them that the pilgrims who applied for admission at the Wicket Gate were not only received by the Keeper, but welcomed in the most impressive manner. When Christiana and her children had entered He called to a trumpeter stationed above, and directed him to entertain them with shouting and sound of trumpet. Accordingly, the air was presently filled with melody ; which reminds us of those parables of our Saviour in which the inhabitants of heaven are represented as rejoicing over the repentance of sinners upon earth. Those who

sympathise with the Prince of that radiant place must rejoice when He recovers His lost treasures. You are something more than a lost coin or a wandering sheep: you are a lost child. Be encouraged therefore to return to your Heavenly Father through that Christ who is the only Door and the Living Way: for "I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

II.

The pilgrims prayed successfully for PURITY. "God grant," said one of them to the Interpreter, "that I may be found at the last of Him in peace, without spot and blameless." Accordingly, the Interpreter did not permit the person who presented this petition to leave His House until she and her com-

panions had been washed in His Bath, after which their appearance was very much improved. That Bath was Christ, in whose blood we all need to be washed. From the day when His blood was shed the ancient prediction was fulfilled: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." The result may be best described in the language of the last of the seers. "I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes. . . . And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in

the blood of the Lamb." If we are to occupy a place among these white-robed and blessed associates, we must heed the Voice which so graciously accosts us in words once addressed to God's ancient people. They prayed, but prayed in vain by reason of the iniquity in which they persisted, notwithstanding their observance of sabbaths, sacrifices, and solemn assemblies in God's house. But He was willing that they should pray successfully, and intimated how this might be done. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Their "many prayers" were inappropriate, because among them was

no prayer for the purity they needed accompanied by the penitence which was necessary to prove its sincerity. The words thus addressed to them assure us that, if we sincerely seek the cleansing grace of God, our deepest and foulest stains may be removed; and, moreover, we know that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." There are two things which the sinner needs that may be appropriately mentioned here. One is such a removal of his spiritual blindness as will enable him to see his spiritual pollution. This will result in the earnest desire for purity which has been experienced by every child of God. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow," will be the language of his heart. The other thing he needs is the conviction that he can be cleansed in no other way than the one which God has appointed. As it was in vain for

Naaman to seek the removal of his leprosy by bathing in Abana, or Pharpar, or any water but that of Jordan: so must he be well assured that the only way in which the defilement of sin can be removed from his nature involves the application of the blood of Christ to his spirit by the agency of the Holy Ghost. Let the sinner once clearly perceive his own pollution, and also the only but all-sufficient remedy for it, and nothing will prevent him from praying that he may be made clean until the prayer is answered. Again and again will he prefer the supplication which the psalmist was prompted to employ, "Create in me a clean heart, O God!" The spiritual purity, or holiness, which is thus implored is a blessing which God is well pleased to bestow. It occasions those who obtain it to resemble Himself, and He regards such resemblance with great complacency wherever it appears.

It qualifies them also for that beatific communion with Himself to which His people are encouraged to aspire, and of which they have an earnest even now. Such communion could neither be tolerated on His part nor enjoyed by those who have not been cleansed from sin. It is therefore evident that all who hope to obtain a place within the Celestial City will do well to seek by prayer and supplication that holiness which is essential to its inhabitants and well-pleasing to its King.

III.

The pilgrims prayed successfully for PEACE. Thus Christian prayed for the removal of his burden, and thus Hopeful prayed for the blessing of which I speak. The experience of the latter pilgrim may here claim our attention with advantage.

Hopeful prayed for peace after vainly seeking to obtain it in other ways. He sought to pacify

his conscience at first by diverting his thoughts from religion to other things, and afterwards by the amendment of his manners. But conscience was not to be pacified in any such way; and you will be wise to betake yourselves at once to prayer rather than to waste your time by seeking thus to appease it. I do not, indeed, deny that a false peace may be sometimes obtained by the worldling and the formalist, but such a peace is only temporary. Sooner or later it will cease to soothe the spirit of its subject, and that spirit will be filled with horrors. If you would attain to an enduring peace—a peace that shall outlast the article of death and the day of judgment—the sooner you begin to pray for it the better.

Hopeful prayed for peace by the advice of Faithful. The martyr-pilgrim directed his attention to the Scripture doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ, and urged him to pray that He might be revealed to him. This was

good advice, without which Hopeful might not have prayed at all; and if you have friends or neighbours who let you see that they are in trouble about their spiritual condition, what better advice can you give? This is not, however, the 'only question that presents itself in relation to this matter. What probability is there that this advice, so good in itself, will be taken when tendered by you? The advice which has no weight when given by one man may have much weight when given by another. The legal advice of a sound lawyer, or the medical advice of an experienced physician, is apt to impress men as worthy of notice, when that of another person would probably be treated with contempt. Similarly the advice which a consistent Christian gives to a fellow-man respecting his spiritual interests is far more likely to take effect than the very same advice would be if it proceeded from the mouth of a mere professor of religion. By all means

give the best advice you can to those who need it, but endeavour also to live in such a manner as to render that advice effective.

Hopeful prayed for peace importunately. He found it necessary to do so. His prayer was not answered until it had been urged repeatedly. He was somewhat discouraged by this circumstance. He was even tempted to relinquish his quest after peace by this means as he had relinquished it by others. But he did not relinquish it, and his perseverance was rewarded. Christ was revealed to him, and the Saviour so assured him of His grace and power that his eyes were filled with water and his heart with love. The Lord Jesus told him nothing more than he had already read in the sacred volume ; but it is one thing to read the gospel for ourselves, or to hear it proclaimed by a fellow-man, and quite another to have it brought home to us by the direct agency of Christ Himself. There are persons who have a certain familiarity

with the Scriptures, such as may be acquired by attending the sanctuary or reading them at home, but have no real knowledge of the way of peace. They need to hear the living voice of the Son of God whispering peace within their hearts; and those who would hear that should do as Hopeful did. Pray. Pray importunately. Pray till you obtain what you request. Pray in remembrance of those passages of Holy Writ which encourage importunity at the footstool of the Great King. The parable of the importunate widow is not the only passage in the Bible which illustrates the Saviour's saying, "That men ought always to pray and not to faint." To be at peace is so desirable and necessary that men may well be urged to pray without ceasing for this Divine blessing, and the prayer of faith is so resistless that peace will certainly be obtained by those who seek it persistently therewith.

IV.

The pilgrims prayed successfully for PROTECTION. They were exposed to many perils, and could not have escaped without prayer. In this respect their experience corresponded with that of God's people in actual life. The power of the individual Christian, and even the resources of the entire Church, are insufficient to rescue one human being from the spiritual perils which menace him. But the Prince of pilgrims is omnipotent, and the prayer which appeals to Him for aid is no vain supplication.

We read that when Christian passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death he found his sword to have no terrors for the fell foes that hovered about him, which occasioned him to betake himself to a weapon called All-prayer. Crying out as he pressed forward, "O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul!" he got safely through that most dismal valley. This feature in the narrative is taken, of course, from that

passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians, in which Christians are not only exhorted to take the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, but also to employ all prayer. The meaning of this is probably that God's people should pray for help in all possible ways. Suppose, *e. g.*, that you are endangered by a particular temptation which occasions you much distress. In that case it is likely that you will entreat that the temptation may be removed from you. If, however, it be not removed, you may then entreat that you may be removed from it. But if this petition be not granted, you may still entreat that you may be endued with strength sufficient for the occasion. This is all-prayer, and those who bravely and skilfully use it are invincible. Prayer is good, but all-prayer better; and when you "take, to arm you for the fight, the panoply of God," see that this particular weapon is not omitted.

When Christiana and Mercy were assaulted by the two ill-favoured ones between the Wicket Gate and the Interpreter's House, they were unable to dissuade those wretches from attempting their destruction, or to protect themselves from them. But prayer was possible, and, raising their voices, they cried for help. Their prayer was heard, and one presently came to their assistance. This Reliever (as he is called) not only put their adversaries to flight: he taught them a lesson which one shall do well to learn. He expressed surprise that, being aware of their own weakness, they had not besought their Lord to provide them a protector in the first instance; and when Christiana expressed her surprise that the Lord had not done this without being asked, he gave her to understand that the Lord does not think it worth while to grant those blessings to His people which they do not think it worth while

to ask, but prefers to let their experience teach them the value of such blessings. It is not enough to need a blessing: we must feel this need. It is not enough to need a blessing: we must pray for it. "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."

Mr. Standfast prayed for protection in the time of peril, as we have already had occasion to notice. The other pilgrims found him with bent knees and lifted hands on the Enchanted Ground. Their arrival was the answer to his prayer, which was for deliverance from Madam Bubble. The temptress went her way at the sight of Mr. Great-heart and his company. Worldliness loses its attractions in the society of saints, and Christian fellowship is a great safeguard to those who enjoy it against the seductions which a solitary pilgrim finds it hard to resist with success. The value of the Church as an institution for promoting holiness

is very great. All great societies are apt to generate certain influences corresponding with their own character. Thus the influence generated by a college is favourable to learning, that by an army to courage, that by a benevolent society to charity, and that by a Christian community to an unworldly condition of spirit. If we associate chiefly with worldlings, their influence will inevitably make us like themselves ; but if our best friends and most intimate companions are in the world without being of it, the influence they exert will be favourable to the cultivation of personal piety on our part. The means of grace by which God enables a man to stand fast in the right way, when attracted in other directions by those seductions of which the world is full, is the society of his fellow-Christians. When, therefore, you will feel somewhat inclined to yield to Madam Bubble, than which no danger can be more serious, pray for true Christian com-

panions, in whose society your better nature will be so quickened that the Enchantress will be utterly foiled.

The experience of every pilgrim is more or less that of the psalmist. "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul!" Well, what was the result? Why, such an answer to his petition as occasioned him to say with a gratitude we shall do well to emulate, "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." When the Christian is in deadly peril, and can neither protect himself nor be protected by his fellow-men, there is yet one thing he may do with effect. He can pray to One who never fails to hear the supplications of His people and has pledged Himself to answer them.

V.

The pilgrims prayed successfully for the restoration of their spiritual PROSPERITY. When Christian had lost his precious Roll, and no longer enjoyed the sense of a personal interest in the Saviour, he prayed to regain his treasure. When the two pilgrims were in the hold of Giant Despair they prayed to regain their freedom. When young Matthew lay sick after eating the forbidden fruit he prayed to regain his health. It was the best thing for them to do under the painful circumstances in which they were placed, and what better can we do when our experience resembles theirs in this respect?

Restoration to spiritual prosperity is sorely needed by those who need it at all. The loss of such prosperity is a terrible thing. It is bad enough to lose the temporal prosperity which has been enjoyed. To be deprived of health and wealth, name and fame, is an

experience which has driven some men mad. To be bereaved of wife or husband, child or parent, friend or patron, has broken the hearts of many who were thus afflicted. But this kind of trouble, however hard to bear, is not the worst that can fall to the Christian's lot. There is consolation for him when thus afflicted. If no fellow-Christian be at hand to remind him that such trouble is a means of grace and a proof of Divine love to persons of his class, it is certain that his Bible will soon remind him of this truth as he turns to its hallowed pages for the comfort he craves. But the loss of spiritual prosperity is another thing. Destruction and despair are near the person who sustains it. It is a manifold loss, for its subject loses the spiritual health, power, peace, beauty, honour and wealth which he formerly possessed. It is a loss of incalculable magnitude, an evil of unspeakable import, bearing some such relation to the loss of tempora

prosperity as eternity does to time, or the spirit of a man to the earthly house of this tabernacle in which it passes the first stage of its existence.

Restoration to spiritual prosperity is a blessing for which very many persons need to pray. The pilgrims who wander from the right way are innumerable. There are probably some among us at the present time who are conscious that they are thus wandering. There is not one Christian here or elsewhere who will deny that he has gone astray in various directions, and many times. But perhaps those who have consciously lost their spiritual prosperity are few compared with those who have lost it without becoming aware of the circumstance, or, at all events, without realising the magnitude of their loss. It is worth while to subject ourselves to searching self-examination from time to time, and in the light of God's Word to look well to the ways of our feet. Such self-

examination is counselled by the Scriptures, and must be regarded as essential to our spiritual welfare.

Restoration to spiritual prosperity is happily possible. "All things are possible with God," and the experience of His people teaches them that this is no exception to the rule. The language of the Psalmist has been gratefully adopted by many a pilgrim whose wandering feet have been reclaimed by Divine grace : "Bless the Lord, O my soul ; and forget not all his benefits ; who forgiveth all thine iniquities ; who healeth all thy diseases ; who redeemeth thy life from destruction." What God has done for others He is willing to do for you. But there must be prayer on your part. Would you know the kind of language that becomes a pilgrim who has gone astray and desires to be restored ? Turn, then, to the fifty-first Psalm, and you will find an expression of the contrition, the desire, and

the resolution of one who had erred most grievously. Ponder the language of the penitent backslider, and consider whether you may not adopt it as an appropriate expression of your own feelings. Ponder also for the same purpose the language of the penitent prodigal, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." It will not be long before the person who prays in the spirit thus indicated is enabled to rejoice in the sense of restored prosperity and Divine love.

VI.

The pilgrims prayed successfully for PROFITABLE INSTRUCTION. As often as any of them knocked for admission at the Interpreter's House, they thereby craved this blessing. Christiana, particularly, displayed a desire to obtain it from him in large measure. After she and her companions had been in his House some time, and had seen many of the

instructive things he was wont to exhibit and explain, she was not content. We read that "Christiana again desired that the Interpreter would either show or tell of some other things that are profitable." Accordingly, he proceeded to impart such instruction as he deemed suitable to the characters and circumstances of his hearers. On a subsequent occasion they petitioned him again to supply them with suitable instruction. He had appointed Mr. Great-heart to be their guide to the House Beautiful, but they were both to part with their pastor there. They therefore sent a request by him to his Master that he might return to them and act as their guide right through; a request which was graciously granted, to their exceeding joy.

This reminds us that the Holy Spirit sometimes imparts instruction directly to His people, and at other times by the agency of His servants. He employs their pastors

especially in this work, and they should not neglect, therefore, to pray that suitable pastors may be provided for them and continued to them. They need to be enlightened respecting all that pertains to their spiritual welfare. They have much to learn about God—His nature, character, will, providence, and operations in their own hearts. They have much to learn about themselves—their innate depravity, the secret of self-conquest, the latent resources and possibilities of their own renewed being, and the duties which devolve on them as the chosen people of God. They have much to learn also about their spiritual allies and enemies, about the past and the future, about things visible and invisible. The Bible is replete with information on these subjects, but to read it is not enough. Those who do read it with any care will find from its own pages that those who would master its most valuable lessons must pray for the aid of its Divine

Author. The petition it suggests as suitable to such persons as desire to be successful students is this: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law!" In responding to this prayer the Holy Spirit may employ the agency of pastors, or the instrumentality of this or that providential circumstance; but He will respond to it in one way or another as often as it is sincerely urged. In proportion as you are conscious of your ignorance and afflicted by it will be the earnestness with which you implore that Divine enlightenment which alone can make men wise unto salvation. "Wisdom is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding." How? By prayer.

VII.

The pilgrims not only prayed successfully for themselves, but also for OTHER PERSONS. Thus Christian prayed for his godless neigh-

bours as soon as he had commenced praying for himself. He did not wait to be assured of his own salvation before entreating the Divine mercy on their behalf. Whereas they sought to direct his attention from spiritual things, he shut himself in his own chamber and prayed for their salvation as well as his own. Christiana also prayed for her children and her companion. Mercy was left outside when she obtained admittance at the Wicket Gate, and she therefore entreated that her youthful friend might be allowed to enter also ; nor did she entreat in vain. The pilgrims prayed, moreover, for their pastor on one occasion when their prayers were sorely needed by him. When he and Giant Maul engaged in conflict, Mr. Great-heart was felled by the first blow from the giant's club ; but the women and children were looking on, and though they could not aid their champion in any other way, they cried to God on his

behalf with such effect that he presently rose to his feet and slew the foe, so that they pursued their way in peace.

You know that the Scriptures enjoin God's people to employ intercession as well as other kinds of prayer. "I exhort, therefore," says the apostle, "that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men." To what extent you have obeyed or neglected this injunction is a subject which may fairly claim your serious consideration. Rulers and their subjects, pastors and their flocks, physicians and their patients, teachers and their pupils, widows and orphans, miners and mariners, all classes and conditions of men, may be greatly benefitted by the intercession of God's people on their behalf. There are many things you can't do for those who need guidance, protection, succour, and assistance of various kinds: but there is one thing you can do

for such persons. You can pray to Him that is omnipotent, and whose resources are infinite, that He will be pleased to befriend them according to their need.

The Scriptures encourage intercession as well as enjoin it. Not only do they contain precious promises relative to the success of prayer, but they record instances in which intercession was employed with the most signal effect. Thus the prophet prayed that the arm of King Jeroboam, which had been rendered impotent at his word, might be restored, and was immediately answered. Thus, also, the patriarch Job prayed that his three friends, who had provoked the Divine displeasure by their cruel injustice to himself, might be pardoned, and prevailed. Thus, once more (though these are by no means the only instances which might be cited), Moses prayed that the people of Israel, whose perversity exposed them to peril of destruction at the hands of their

offended God, might be spared, and obtained the remission of their sentence. Is the Lord's ear heavier than it was in ancient times, or His heart harder, or His arm shorter? That cannot be; for "every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

It is probable that your own experience assures you that ~~what~~ the Scriptures say respecting intercession is abundantly true. You can well remember when some of God's people made intercession on your behalf with manifest success. You were in trouble, and no help was at hand till their prayers obtained it from God. As well can you remember when a fellow-Christian was in trouble from which he was delivered in answer to your prayers and those of your brethren, ~~whose~~ petitions blended with your own before the mercy-seat. It would be hard to convince you that there

was no connection between the deliverances thus experienced and the intercession which preceded them. A sceptical philosopher might puzzle you in relation to the matter, but would not be likely to shake your belief that the prayers to which we refer produced the improvement experienced by those on whose behalf they were presented.

Brethren, if you desire to accomplish your pilgrimage to the Celestial City, and to help others on the road thither—if you desire to avoid the errors to which you are prone, to vanquish your spiritual enemies, and to surmount the difficulties incident to the course marked out for you—I do beseech you by your own weakness and God's power, by the promises of God and the experience men have acquired of their faithfulness, to pray without ceasing that you may finish your course with joy, and that others may do the same.



